

2023 Evaluation of the Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc.

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2023 Evaluation of the Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc.

OLO Report 2023-11

Executive Summary

September 12, 2023

The County Council established the Bethesda Urban Partnership (BUP) in 1993 as the urban district corporation for the Bethesda Urban District. By law, an urban district corporation exists for five years before it must be reauthorized by Council resolution and approved by the County Executive. The Office of Legislative Oversight must conduct a performance evaluation before its term is renewed. BUP's current term ends on January 31, 2024. Since this evaluation finds that BUP continues to fulfill its mandated responsibilities, **OLO recommends that the Council reauthorize BUP for an additional five-year term.**

Bethesda Urban Partnership's Responsibilities

BUP's services continue to fulfill the organization's responsibilities as defined in the law, its governing documents, and its contracts with the County. The table below provides examples of BUP's services in six key areas.

Service Area	Examples
Maintaining and enhancing streetscape amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintenance and landscaping (including trash/recycling collection, tree maintenance, snow removal, and street sweeping) of Bethesda public rights-of-way, public parking structures, and highway medians.• Maintenance of pedestrian tunnel next to the Bethesda Metro Station.• Trash collection and street sweeping in Wheaton and Silver Spring .
Programming public interest activities, including promotion, organization, and support of cultural, recreational, and business activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintenance of website, conducting media outreach and publishing written advertising materials.• Organization of special promotional events such as Taste of Bethesda, Bethesda Summer Concerts, and Winter Wonderland.• Promotion and management of cultural activities and events such as Triangle Arts Studios and the Bethesda Film Fest.
Advancing the business and residential environment and sense of community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assisting Bethesda visitors through the Ask Me Team.• Supporting local restaurants by creating and maintaining the Bethesda Streeteries.• Communicating with appropriate agencies about emergency maintenance, safety, or cleanliness issues.
Enhancing safety and security in public areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaboration with County Police and Fire/Rescue Service to improve safety and security.
Providing specialized transportation services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Management of the free downtown Bethesda Circulator.
Increasing the number of people using alternative modes of transportation for commuting to Bethesda	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assistance with the development of traffic mitigation plans for employers.• Marketing of alternative transportation options such as public transit, carpools, and rideshare services to employers, employees, and residents in downtown Bethesda.• Completion of an annual survey of employees and residents to monitor changes in transportation use.

Changes to BUP's Services During COVID-19

BUP experienced reductions in services, programs, and funding during COVID-19, forcing it to reduce or reimagine many of its activities between FY19 and FY22, such as limiting Circulator bus service and moving in-person events online. **BUP also initiated new activities during the pandemic in response to emerging community needs.** For example:

- **The Bethesda Streeteries.** BUP partnered with DOT to open two streeteries locations in June 2020 to create more outdoor seating for people to gather safely and patronize restaurants during COVID-19. The initiative became very popular with restaurants, residents, and visitors. BUP has made the Norfolk Avenue Streeteries permanent and plans to expand it.
- **Savor Bethesda Restaurant Week.** BUP started *Savor Bethesda* in October 2020 with special dine in and take out deals to encourage patrons to support local restaurants during the pandemic. The initiative will continue annually.

Progress on Strategic Plan Goals

BUP's 2019–2024 Strategic Plan established a set of strategic goals and objectives in four core areas listed below. **BUP's actions since 2019 show that it met its goals and adapted its services to meet community needs, particularly during the pandemic.** Examples of BUP's actions over the last five years include:

1. **The Bethesda Brand** – updated the BUP Brand; created monthly newsletter and special videos to highlight businesses during COVID; communicated COVID health information to businesses; and partnered with DOT to create streeteries.
2. **Beautification** – installed four public murals; expanded Summer Concert Series; created “Yappy Hour” pop-up dog parks; provided DOT with inventory of crosswalks needing restriping; and secured sponsorships for new and improved events.
3. **Arts & Entertainment** – Drew tens of thousands to public art events like Summer Concerts and the Bethesda Art Walk.
4. **Mobility** – promoted and educated about new bike lanes; advocated for wider sidewalks, more bike racks, and more EV chargers; refinished Circulator benches; and helped increase NADMS to 52% for employees and 64% for residents in 2022.

Feedback on BUP's Services

Overall, staff from the County Government and community representatives who work with BUP shared positive comments about the professionalism of BUP's staff and the high quality of BUP's services. Most reported that BUP communicates and collaborates effectively with its partners. Many cited BUP's expertise in urban district management and emphasized the role of BUP's senior management in ensuring efficiency.

OLO also reviewed focus group feedback on BUP's performance that BUP compiled as part of its 2024–2029 strategic planning process. This feedback indicated that various participants are pleased with BUP and felt the organization was important for the continued success of Downtown Bethesda.

Bethesda Urban Partnership's Finances

From FY19–FY23, 94% of BUP's revenue came from the County Government, and 6% came from non-County sources. Over this period, BUP's County revenue decreased by 0.5% and non-County revenue decreased by 3.2%. BUP's revenues exceeded its expenditures each year from FY19–FY23.

Bethesda Urban Partnership Revenues and Expenditures, FY19 – FY23 (\$000s)

	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
Revenues					
County Contracts and other County Revenue	\$5,091	\$4,503	\$4,681	\$4,617	\$5,066
Bethesda Urban District	\$4,379	\$3,777	\$3,650	\$3,665	\$4,128
Bethesda Transportation Management District	\$603	\$618	\$614	\$629	\$639
Wheaton/Silver Spring Street Sweeping and Trash Removal	\$83	\$82	\$212	\$294	\$270
Groundskeeping at Public Parking Lots and Garages	\$26	\$26	\$30	\$29	\$29
Special Approp. - Winterization of Norfolk Ave. Streeterly	-	-	\$175	-	-
Non-County Revenue	\$476	\$337	\$195	\$253	\$321
Total BUP Revenue	\$5,567	\$4,840	\$4,876	\$4,870	\$5,387
Expenditures					
Field Operations	\$2,816	\$2,402	\$2,320	\$2,409	\$2,886
Marketing and Special Events	\$805	\$823	\$684	\$685	\$722
Transportation Management	\$568	\$579	\$587	\$552	\$539
Internal Operations	\$589	\$701	\$711	\$761	\$815
Arts and Entertainment District	\$171	\$102	\$64	\$140	\$158
Reserve for Capital Equipment, Special Projects, and Operations	\$99	\$47	\$19	\$26	\$60
Total BUP Expenditures	\$5,048	\$4,653	\$4,384	\$4,808	\$5,180

BUP's non-County revenue comes from events and sponsorships, Bethesda Circulator advertising, and service contracts with other entities. BUP uses this revenue to enhance services and fund a capital equipment, special projects, and operations reserve.

BUP's County revenue comes from service contracts managed by three different County entities. In FY23, BUP's agreement to manage the Bethesda Urban District provided the majority of BUP's County funding. BUP's contracts with the County include:

- 1. Bethesda Urban District Services, incl. Bethesda Circulator** – administered by BCC-RSC
County funding source: Bethesda Urban District Fund, Mass Transit Fund (81% of County revenue)
Services covered: BUP's field operations, Ask Me Team, marketing, and Circulator expenses.
- 2. Transportation Management Services** – administered by DOT
County funding source: Mass Transit Fund (12% of County revenue)
Services covered: BUP's annual commuter surveys, ride matching efforts.

3. **Street Sweeping and Trash Collection in Wheaton and Silver Spring** –Mid-County and SS RSCs
County funding source: Wheaton and Silver Spring Urban Districts (5% of County revenue)
Services covered: Each linear curb mile of street cleaned, and each trash receptacle serviced.
4. **Groundskeeping Services at Public Parking Lots and Garages** – administered by DOT
County funding source: Bethesda PLD Fund (1% of County revenue)
Services covered: BUP's maintenance and landscaping activities at parking lots and garages.

Bethesda Urban District Fund

The Bethesda Urban District funds BUP's agreement to manage the Bethesda Urban District. **Transfers from the Bethesda PLD represent the largest source of revenue for the Bethesda Urban District Fund.** In FY23, 65% of the urban district's revenue came from Bethesda PLD transfers. Urban districts may also receive general fund transfers to support services that the County would have otherwise provided to the area without the urban district. In FY19, FY20, and FY21, the Council approved transfers from the County's General Fund to the Bethesda Urban District Fund but zeroed out the transfer from the general fund in FY22 and FY23.

Bethesda Urban District Revenues, FY19 – FY23 (\$000s)

Revenue Source	FY19 Actual	FY20 Actual	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Est.
Urban District Tax	\$693	\$714	\$740	\$736	\$816
OMD Maintenance Charges	\$134	\$184	\$242	\$234	\$184
Transfer from Bethesda Parking Lot District	\$1,532	\$1,620	\$1,610	\$2,409	\$2,352
Transfer from General Fund	\$800	\$810	\$750	0	0
Transfer to General Fund	\$-24	\$-22	\$-21	\$-22	\$-21
Total Revenue	\$3,336	\$3,354	\$3,401	\$3,713	\$3,610

Office of Legislative Oversight Recommendations

OLO offers the following recommendations for Council action regarding the Bethesda Urban Partnership:

- #1: Reauthorize the Bethesda Urban Partnership for another five-year term and retain the requirement for an OLO evaluation prior to reauthorizing.**

OLO's review confirmed that BUP's activities continue to fulfill the purposes of the organization. In addition, OLO found that BUP's County Government and community partners are pleased with the quality of BUP's work.

- #2: Require BUP to develop a new five-year strategic plan before the next reauthorization.**

OLO recommends that the Council require BUP to continue to seek input from its service recipients as it begins its strategic planning process. In addition, the Council should require BUP to include a status report on its implementation of objectives outlined in the previous strategic plan.

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Chapter 1. Authority, Scope, and Organization of Report

A. Authority

Council Resolution [19-08](#), *Fiscal Year 2023 Work Program of the Office of Legislative Oversight* and Chapter 68A of the County Code.

B. Scope of Report

Chapter 68A of the County Code authorizes the County to establish urban district corporations to provide services within the County's urban districts. By law, an urban district corporation exists for five years after its articles of incorporation are accepted for recording by the State Department of Assessments and Taxation. An urban district corporation can be extended for an unlimited number of additional five-year terms by a resolution adopted by the County Council and approved by the County Executive. Before the County renews a corporation's term, the law requires the Office of Legislative Oversight to conduct a performance evaluation that includes feedback from property owners, business owners, and residents from in and around the urban district.

Bethesda is the only urban district in Montgomery County that has an urban district corporation. In 1994, the Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc. (BUP) began its first term as the urban district corporation to manage the Bethesda Urban District. In this capacity, BUP performs landscaping and other maintenance services, plans special events, promotes the urban district, and oversees the operation of the Bethesda Circulator, a shuttle serving the downtown area. BUP also manages the Bethesda Transportation Management District and the Bethesda Arts and Entertainment District.

BUP has operated for six five-year terms since its establishment, and the County Council has released five prior OLO evaluations of BUP. On January 29, 2019, the County Council approved Resolution 19-08, which reauthorized the Bethesda Urban Partnership for its sixth five-year term starting on February 1, 2019, and ending on January 31, 2024.

To aid the Council as it considers the reauthorization of BUP for a seventh term, this OLO report includes:

- Descriptions of BUP's current services, staffing, progress on previous strategic plan goals and new goals and strategies, and finances; and
- Feedback on BUP's performance from County Government, community representatives, and other individuals who regularly interact with BUP or benefit from its services.

C. Organization

Chapter 2. Overview of the Bethesda Urban Partnership’s Legal Framework describes the Bethesda Urban District and other designated districts in downtown Bethesda, and provides an overview of BUP’s governing structure, including state and County laws governing BUP.

Chapter 3. BUP Operations describes BUP’s staffing and its maintenance, marketing, transportation management, and other services, BUP’s progress on its 2019 – 2024 strategic plan and the goals and strategies of its 2024 – 2029 strategic plan.

Chapter 4. Finances describes BUP’s funding sources and expenditures for the past five years and the sources of County revenue spent on BUP services.

Chapter 5. Feedback from County Government and Community Representatives provides feedback on BUP’s performance from a variety of individuals who interact directly with BUP or benefit from its services.

Chapters 6. and 7. present the Office of Legislative Oversight’s **Findings and Recommendations**.

Chapter 8. Agency Comments presents comments from the County’s Chief Administrative Officer and BUP’s Board of Directors on the final draft of this report.

D. Methodology

To complete this report, OLO gathered information through a review of County laws and operating budget documents as well as reviewing BUP’s financial reports, strategic plan, and other materials describing BUP’s work. OLO also conducted interviews with BUP Board members, BUP staff, County staff, and other individuals who interact with BUP on a regular basis to obtain feedback on BUP’s performance. OLO also used feedback from focus groups facilitated by Progressive Urban Management Associates during BUP’s strategic planning process.

E. Acknowledgements

Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) staff member Chitra Kalyandurg conducted this study, with assistance from Natalia Carrizosa, Leslie Rubin, and Karen Pecoraro. OLO received a high level of cooperation from everyone involved in this study and appreciates the information shared and the insights provided by all who participated, including:

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Chapter 2. Bethesda Urban Partnership’s Legal Framework

The County Council established the Bethesda Urban District in 1993, and in the same year created the Bethesda Urban Partnership (BUP) as the corporation authorized to manage the district. Since its establishment, BUP has been reauthorized five times by the Council and has taken on additional responsibilities related to other special districts in Bethesda. Table 2-1 presents a timeline of key events from BUP’s establishment in 1993 to the most recent reauthorization in 2019.

Table 2-1: Bethesda Urban Partnership Timeline, 1993 – 2019

Date	Event
December 1993	Council creates BUP to manage the Bethesda Urban District and approves BUP’s Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws (Resolution 12-1400)
December 1998	Council reauthorizes BUP until January 31, 2004 (Resolution 13-1994)
February 1999	Council adopts Resolution 14-56 which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes a transportation management district in Bethesda • Allows creation of a Transportation Management Organization (TMO) • Approves BUP as a grantee for the TMO
December 1999	BUP as TMO begins managing the Bethesda Transportation Management District
April 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State of Maryland designates Bethesda as an Arts and Entertainment District • BUP becomes the manager of the Bethesda Arts and Entertainment District
January 2004	Council reauthorizes BUP until January 31, 2009 (Resolution 15-461)
September 2006	BUP begins managing the Bethesda Circulator
December 2008	Council reauthorizes BUP until January 31, 2014 (Resolution 16-786)
December 2013	Council reauthorizes BUP until January 31, 2019 (Resolution 17-955)
January 2019	Council reauthorizes BUP until January 31, 2024 (Resolution 19-08)

This chapter provides an overview of the governance structure and history of BUP, and is organized as follows:

- **Section A** provides an overview of the Bethesda Urban District and its legal framework, including the requirements for establishing an urban district corporation;
- **Section B** describes the BUP articles of incorporation and bylaws;
- **Section C** reviews the other special districts created in Bethesda and their relationship to BUP; and
- **Section D** summarizes the Council action to reauthorize BUP in 2019.

A. Overview of the Bethesda Urban District

1. General Overview

County Code Chapter 68A, Montgomery County Urban Districts, permits the County Council to create urban districts. Urban districts are special taxing districts with diverse commercial, institutional, and residential development that the County desires to “maintain and enhance...as prosperous, livable urban centers.”¹ The Code states that the purpose of urban districts is to provide services for the benefit of persons and property within the district that are in addition to the services normally provided by the County.² Authorized “additional” services within an urban district include maintaining and improving streetscapes and amenities, promoting and programming public interest activities, enhancing safety and security in public areas, and providing capital projects that promote the growth and stability of the district.

In addition to Bethesda, the Council has also established urban districts in Friendship Heights, Silver Spring, and Wheaton. The law provides that funding for urban district services can come from:

- An urban district tax that may not exceed \$0.30 per \$100 of assessed property value (Bethesda, Silver Spring, and Wheaton) or a commercial district charge on owners who lease property to commercial or residential tenants³ (Friendship Heights);
- Parking lot district fees, limited to the number of parking spaces multiplied by enforcement hours per year, multiplied by \$0.20;
- A charge on optional method development property for the cost of maintaining off-site amenities, such as streetscape improvements;⁴
- Transfers from the County’s General Fund, which may be subject to repayment; and
- Other revenue collected by the urban district from various sources, such as charges for services or private contributions.

The law specifies that the Council may levy either an urban district tax or a commercial district charge within an urban district, but not both.⁵

¹ County Code § 68A-2(a).

² County Code § 68A-3(d).

³ The commercial district charge is as follows: \$0.165 per square foot for each net rentable square foot for Class 2 Properties, excluding hotels and motels; \$120 per room for hotels or motels; and \$120 per unit for Class 1 Properties that contain five or more residential units available for rent for non-transient dwelling purposes. Class 1 Properties that contain less than five residential units and residences, and residential units restricted by law to households earning 100 percent of the area median income or less, are exempt from the commercial district charge. (County Code § 68A-4(a)).

⁴ Optional method development is “property for which the owner has agreed with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission to be responsible for installing and maintaining both on-site and off-site improvements.” (County Code § 68A-1(h)).

⁵ County Code § 68A-4(a).

Funds for urban districts may only be used for the district where they are collected and for the allowable services. Additionally, the law states that “the proceeds from either the urban district tax or parking fees transferred into an urban district fund must not exceed 90 percent of their combined total.”⁶

2. Urban District Corporations

The County Code requires an urban district to be managed by a County department or by an urban district corporation created by the Council.⁷ Maryland law authorizes charter counties to create commercial district management authorities for the purposes of “promotion; marketing; and the provision of security, maintenance, or amenities within the district.”⁸ The Bethesda Urban Partnership was established as the urban district corporation for the Bethesda Urban District.⁹

The County Code describes an urban district management corporation as “a public instrumentality of the County...[that]...is not within the Executive or Legislative branches of County government, is separate and distinct from the County, and is an independent entity.”¹⁰ The Code also states that an urban district corporation may provide the following services:

- Promotion, organization, and support of cultural, recreational, and business activities;
- Specialized transportation services;
- Enhancement and maintenance of streetscape; and
- Other initiatives to advance the business and residential environment and sense of community.¹¹

In 1995, the County Attorney concluded that an urban district corporation is a “public entity” under County procurement laws, which allows the County to enter into a contract with an urban district corporation without competition.¹² Other County Code requirements for urban district corporations that apply to BUP include:

⁶ County Code § 68A-4(c)(d).

⁷ County Code § 68A-9(a).

⁸ Md. Code art. 25A, Chartered Counties of Maryland § 5(FF)(ii).

⁹ The Silver Spring and Wheaton Urban Districts do not have urban district corporations and are managed by the County. The Friendship Heights Urban District was established in 2023 and is a cross-jurisdictional partnership between Montgomery County and Washington, DC. Like other urban districts, the Friendship Heights Urban District has an Advisory Committee appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the Council. The Friendship Heights Alliance, a 501 c (6) organization, coordinates place management efforts and programs in the urban district. The Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center administers the contract with the Friendship Heights Alliance, and staffs the Urban District Advisory Committee. (County staff, [Council ECON Committee Action Staff Report, Expedited Bill 13-23, Montgomery County Urban Districts – Friendship Heights Urban District, April 11, 2023](#), and [Council ECON Committee Staff Report, Urban Districts – Services and Funding, July 24, 2023](#)).

¹⁰ County Code 68A-9(a).

¹¹ County Code 68A-9(b)

¹² County Code § 11B-41 and February 8, 1995 memorandum from Assistant County Attorney Melnick (Appendix A)

- Establishing an 11-member Board of Directors, composed of a diverse group of business and residential representatives, that “directs all aspects of the program, management, and finances of the corporation,” may establish rules of procedure, and adopts bylaws for the corporation.¹³ The County Executive appoints, and the County Council confirms the board.¹⁴ The board also appoints an executive director for BUP;¹⁵
- Preparing and submitting a budget to the County’s Office of Management and Budget for review and approval as part of the County’s budget process. Corporations must also submit an annual independent audit and management letter and financial report;¹⁶ and
- Using the County’s centralized purchasing system and making a “good faith” effort to meet County goals for purchasing recycled goods and contracting with minority, female, and disabled-owned businesses (even though BUP is not subject to County procurement laws).¹⁷

Chapter 68A states that an urban district corporation exists for five years after the Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation accepts its Articles of Incorporation. The law authorizes the County Council to renew the corporation for additional five-year terms after a performance evaluation by the Office of Legislative Oversight.¹⁸

B. Bethesda Urban Partnership Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws

County law requires the County Council and County Executive to approve an urban district corporation’s articles of incorporation and bylaws. BUP’s Articles of Incorporation establish the name and duration of the corporation, set forth the powers and restrictions on powers, and describe the Board of Directors. According to BUP’s Articles of Incorporation, the corporation’s purposes are to:

- Provide more direct involvement of the community of Bethesda in the provision of services;
- Enlist the active interest and financial support of individuals, citizen and civic groups, firms, and corporations concerned about the improvement of the urban district;
- Provide services, in addition to the services and facilities the County provides generally, for the maintenance of streetscape amenities used by the public;
- Promote and program public interest activities that benefit both residential and commercial interests of the urban district;

¹³ County Code § 68A-10(a)

¹⁴ County Code § 68A-10(d)(f)(g)

¹⁵ The executive director and other employees of an urban district corporation are not County employees and are not eligible to participate in the County’s retirement program. However, corporations may participate in the County’s health insurance program if the corporation pays the employer’s share of the premiums. BUP has participated in the County’s health insurance program since 1998.

¹⁶ County Code § 68A-12(d)

¹⁷ County Code § 68A-11(d)

¹⁸ County Code § 68A-12(e), County Code § 68A-13(a)(b)

- Collaborate and cooperate with federal, state and County agencies, civic associations and other improvement associations, and business associations;
- To have and to exercise to the extent necessary or desirable for the accomplishment of any of the aforesaid purposes...any and all powers conferred upon non-stock corporations; and
- Support the activities of the other nonprofit organizations serving the Bethesda Urban District.¹⁹

BUP's Bylaws describe the structure of the Board of Directors, including the terms of board members, board meetings, and officers and committees of the board. It also describes the duties of the Executive Director and the Corporation's finance and procurement practices.

The Council and Executive first approved BUP's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws in 1993 and approved amendments to the bylaws in 2006. BUP must submit any changes to its articles of incorporation or bylaws to the Executive and Council for approval.

In August 2020, BUP once again submitted proposed amendments to its Bylaws to the Executive and Council for approval. The proposed amendments were in accordance with the County Code and the core bylaw document remained unchanged aside from the proposed amendments. In March 2021, the Council and Executive approved enactment of BUP's amended Bylaws.²⁰

BUP's Articles of Incorporation have not changed since they were first approved, with the exception of amendments in 2018 reflecting reauthorization of BUP.

C. Other Special Districts in Bethesda

In addition to the Bethesda Urban District, there are four other districts in the downtown Bethesda area: the Parking Lot District, the Transportation Management District, the Arts and Entertainment District, and the Central Business District. All four districts fall within the plan area boundary of the Bethesda Central Business District (CBD) Sector Plan, which covers 428 acres.

The map on page 14 shows the geographic relationship among the districts. It shows that the Bethesda Urban District and Arts and Entertainment District share the same boundaries, the Parking Lot District is slightly smaller, and the Transportation Management District and Central Business District Sector Plan Area are both slightly larger.

¹⁹ *Articles of Incorporation of Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc.* A Nonstock Corporation. Article III, § 3 (a-g).

²⁰ [County Council Resolution 19-751, Approval of Amended Bylaws of the Bethesda Urban Partnership \(BUP\), adopted March 2, 2021.](#)

1. Bethesda Parking Lot District

A Parking Lot District (PLD) is a legally designated geographic area defined in Chapter 60 of the County Code in which the County can assess a special property tax and collect parking fees (e.g., parking meter or permit fees) to acquire, build, maintain, or operate off-street parking facilities. Parking fees may also be transferred to an urban district fund, transportation management district, or to the Department of Transportation (DOT) for transit-related activities within a PLD that does not have a transportation management district. Any fees transferred to a transportation management district must not exceed the fees collected in that district. Taxes and fees must be used in the PLD where they were collected.²¹ The Bethesda PLD is one of three County parking lot districts. The other districts are in Silver Spring and Wheaton.²²

2. Transportation Management District

A Transportation Management District (TMD) is a geographic area established by the County Council to reduce traffic congestion through transportation demand management. The goals of transportation demand management are to: “make efficient use of existing transportation infrastructure; increase transportation capacity; reduce existing and future levels of traffic congestion; reduce air and noise pollution, and address climate change; and promote traffic safety together with transit, pedestrian and bicycle safety and access for all users.”²³

The County Code allows the DOT to sign sole source contracts with a transportation management organization to carry out transportation demand management programs in a TMD.²⁴ In 1999, the Council established a TMD in Bethesda, and the Bethesda Urban Partnership became the transportation management organization for the Bethesda TMD through a contract managed by DOT.²⁵ As the transportation management organization, BUP is required to:

- Monitor and assess traffic patterns and pedestrian access and safety;
- Promote traffic and parking control measures;
- Promote transportation-related capital projects;
- Promote or implement transit and ridesharing incentives;
- Promote cooperation between the County and other government agencies;
- Create and implement cooperative County/private sector programs to increase ridesharing and transit use; and
- Submit a biennial report to the Department of Transportation in even-numbered years.

²¹ County Code § 60-16(a)(c)

²² Expedited Bill 15-17, approved in 2017, merged a fourth PLD in Montgomery Hills with the Silver Spring PLD.

²³ County Code § 42A-22(f)(1-5)

²⁴ County Code § 42A-23(c)

²⁵ Resolution 14-56

Under the authorizing resolution, funding to implement transportation management programs for the Bethesda TMD may include revenue transferred from the Bethesda PLD, a transportation management fee on new and existing development, and allocation of state or federal grant funds.²⁶

The Bethesda TMD currently has an 18-member Advisory Committee (11 voting and 7 non-voting members) appointed by the BUP Board of Directors.²⁷ The TMD Advisory Board's responsibilities include advising BUP and the County DOT on transportation management issues in downtown Bethesda and advising BUP on TMD operations.

3. Arts and Entertainment District

The Bethesda Urban District received State of Maryland designation as an Arts and Entertainment (A&E) District in 2002 to help promote the visual and performing arts in Bethesda through tax incentives, special events, and other initiatives. The State of Maryland re-designated the A&E District in 2012 and again in 2022 for 10 years respectively.

This designation provides County tax incentives to encourage artists and entertainment venues to locate in Bethesda, including certain property tax credits and exemption from the admission and amusement tax for art and entertainment establishments and artists who reside and work in the district.²⁸ As the manager of the district, BUP markets the arts in Bethesda and organizes events that showcase visual and performing arts. A 10-member Board of Directors governs the A&E District.²⁹ The Board of Directors has capacity for up to 15 members and can add more board members in the future.

4. Central Business District Sector Plan Area

The Bethesda Central Business District (CBD) Sector Plan Area is a planning area designated by the Maryland-National Capital Area Park and Planning Commission for downtown Bethesda. The 1994 Sector Plan for the Bethesda CBD and its 2006 amendment to the Woodmont Triangle area established a core development area around the Bethesda Metro Station that includes diverse commercial and residential property, encourages cultural activities, improves streetscapes, and addresses transportation and pedestrian needs.³⁰ It also stated the Bethesda Urban Partnership should participate in implementing some of the objectives of the plan, including "retail enhancement, [promotion of Bethesda as a] 'cultural district,' and streetscape objectives."³¹

²⁶ Resolution 14-56

²⁷ At the time of writing, the Bethesda TMD Advisory Board had one vacancy for a voting member;
<https://www.bethesdatransit.org/bethesda/advisory-committee>

²⁸ Maryland Code Annotated, Economic Development Article, § § 4-702, 4-706; COMAR 24.05.26; County Code § 52-16A(b)

²⁹ FY 2024 Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District Board of Directors Roster.

³⁰ *Bethesda Central Business District Sector Plan*. (July 1994); *Woodmont Triangle Amendment to the Sector Plan for the Bethesda CBD*. (March 2006)

³¹ *Bethesda Central Business District Sector Plan*. (July 1994), p. 258.

In May 2017, the County Council approved a new Bethesda Downtown Plan, which retains the plan area boundary of the 1994 CBD Sector Plan and its 2006 Woodmont Triangle amendment.³² Specific goals outlined in the plan call for:

- Ongoing development of Bethesda Row, the Wisconsin Avenue corridor, the Woodmont Triangle, and other established and emerging centers of economic activity;
- Providing “enhanced public services” to residents and businesses in the downtown community;
- Fostering “community enrichment” by creating numerous new parks; preserving community and historic resources; and creating and encouraging the use of public and private gathering places;
- Developing a long-term retail solution for districts with unserved retail demand;
- Developing a ‘high-performance’ area that incentivizes energy-efficient buildings, increased tree canopy cover, and innovative stormwater management to create a sustainable downtown; and
- Increasing the stock of affordable housing in the downtown area by incentivizing expanded affordability; preserving existing, market-rate affordable housing where possible; and promoting both mixed-use and multi-unit residential housing.

D. 2019 Reauthorization of the Bethesda Urban Partnership

Prior to the Council’s reauthorization of BUP in January 2019, the BUP Board of Directors approved a new strategic plan for 2019–2024 and OLO conducted an evaluation of BUP. As part of its strategic plan, the BUP Board identified four core areas that included the following strategies and actions:³³

1. **The Bethesda Brand:** develop a clearly defined Bethesda Brand; strengthen communication with constituents; facilitate social and community events; and activate downtown Bethesda’s parks and plazas through programming, maintenance, and partnerships;
2. **Beautification:** prioritize public art projects in high traffic locations; launch a new districtwide Branding and Wayfinding Master Plan; maintain Bethesda’s green spaces, sidewalks, and crosswalks; and secure additional funding for beautification projects;
3. **Arts and Entertainment:** prioritize public art projects; focus on cultural programming that promotes economic development; incorporate art into the streetscape; and raise funds for projects and programs; and

³² [Bethesda Downtown Plan](#). (May 2017), p. 22

³³ [Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc. 5-Year Strategic Plan, 2019-2024](#)

- 4. Mobility:** enhance mobility infrastructure throughout downtown; launch a new districtwide Branding and Wayfinding Master Plan; activate Norfolk Avenue as a main street; mitigate the impact of construction on constituents; and analyze the feasibility of expanding the Bethesda Circulator.

OLO's evaluation recommended that the Council:

- Reauthorize the Bethesda Urban Partnership for another five-year term and retain the requirement for an OLO evaluation prior to reauthorization.
- Require BUP to develop a new five-year strategic plan before the next reauthorization.

Based on OLO's recommendations and comments from the Bethesda Urban Partnership, in January 2019 the Council chose to:

- Reauthorize the Bethesda Urban Partnership for a sixth five-year term from February 1, 2019, through January 31, 2024.
- Ask BUP to update its five-year strategic plan before the Council considers reauthorization in 2024, and, as part of this update, continue to seek input from constituents, to solicit comments on BUP's proposed objectives from relevant County departments, and include a status report on objectives identified in the 2019–2024 strategic plan.

Except for approving amendments to the bylaws in 2021 and confirming the County Executive's appointments to the Board of Directors, the Council has taken no further action on BUP since 2019.

Transportation Management District
345.1 acres



Chapter 3. Bethesda Urban Partnership’s Operations

This chapter describes Bethesda Urban Partnership’s (BUP) oversight structure and its services. The chapter is organized as follows:

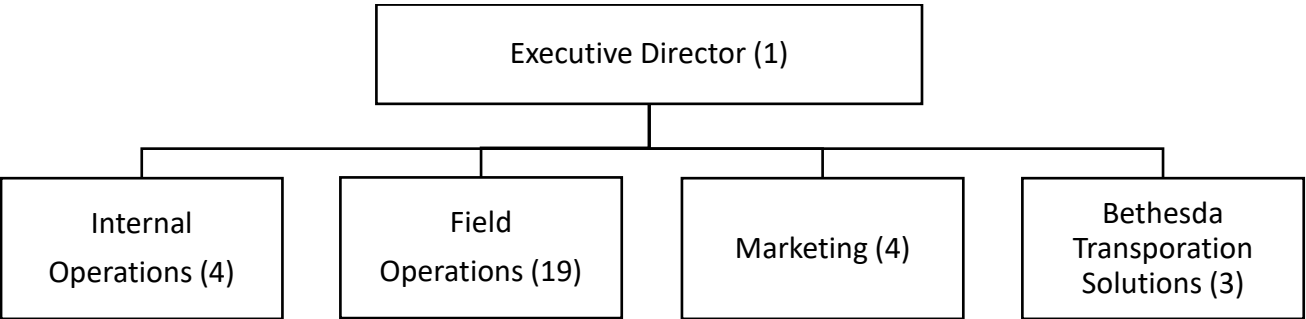
- **Section A** describes BUP’s maintenance, landscaping, marketing, transportation management, and other operating activities.
- **Section B** describes the outcomes of BUP’s 2019-2024 Strategic Plan and the goals and strategies of its 2024-2029 Strategic Plan.

A. Bethesda Urban Partnership Operations

BUP’s operations are divided into four divisions: Internal Operations, Field Operations, Marketing and Communications, and Bethesda Transportation Solutions. Since 2019, BUP’s employee complement has not changed from 31 full-time positions.

Exhibit 3-1 shows the Partnership’s organizational structure and the number of staff in each division. Each division has a director who reports to BUP’s Executive Director.

Exhibit 3-1: Bethesda Urban Partnership Organizational Chart



This section describes each division’s activities and services, and other BUP activities not assigned to a particular division, including safety and security enhancement.

1. Internal Operations

The Internal Operations division manages BUP’s finances and administration. Its primary responsibilities include:

- Maintaining BUP's financial records and providing monthly financial reports to the Board of Directors;
- Preparing annual budgets and cost analyses;
- Managing the annual audit required by the County Code and BUP's contracts with the County;³⁴
- Reporting to the County's Chief Administrative Officer on BUP's efforts to contract with minority, female, and disabled-owned (MFD) businesses and procurement of recycled goods, as required by the County Code³⁵; and
- Managing human resources and office administration, including employee compensation and equipment purchases.

2. Field Operations

With 19 staff, Field Operations is the largest of BUP's four divisions. Field Operations provides maintenance and landscaping activities (14 positions), the Ambassador Program (5 positions), and contracts out the operations of the Bethesda Circulator.

a. Maintenance and Landscaping

BUP's field operations staff maintain and landscape public property within the Bethesda Urban District and provide contract maintenance services on certain non-public or non-County owned properties. The field operations management team conducts regular inspections and keeps a service log to monitor service provision and quality.

Standard Level of Services for the Bethesda Urban District. Each year, the Bethesda Urban Partnership executes an agreement with the County to manage the Bethesda Urban District. Like the FY19–FY22 agreements, the FY23 agreement states that BUP will conduct maintenance activities on “all public rights-of-way within the urban district boundaries.”³⁶ The Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center administers the agreement.

Under its agreement, BUP provides a standard level of services including litter collection, trash receptacle service, sidewalk cleaning and repair, landscape and mowing, tree planting and maintenance, semi-annual flower rotation in planters and public right of ways, snow removal, street sweeping, and maintenance of the Bethesda Metro pedestrian tunnel within the Bethesda Urban District. The

³⁴ BUP must provide the County Department of Finance with an independent audit by a certified public accountant by October 15, 2023. (Article IV, paragraph 2 of Annual Agreement by and between Montgomery County, Maryland and Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc., FY23.)

³⁵ County Code § 68A-11 (d)(1).

³⁶ Article I, paragraph 3 of Annual Agreement by and between Montgomery County, Maryland and Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc., FY23.

agreement specifies minimum requirements for each regularly scheduled maintenance activity. Table 3-1 describes each activity with its FY23 agreement specifications.

Table 3-1: Standard Level of Services for the Bethesda Urban District

Task	Required Frequency	Description
Litter Collection	Once per day except specified holidays	Collect and dispose of litter from sidewalks, pedestrian bridges, planters, tree pits, and areas outside district if it primarily benefits the district
Trash Receptacle Service	3 times per week and daily on weekends	Empty trash cans, replace bags, and pick up litter
Brick Sidewalk Cleaning	As needed	Clean all brick sidewalks to remove gum, paint, and other debris with an environmentally safe method
Landscape Maintenance	2 times/year	Mulch all planting areas and prune shrubs
	Continuously	Control weeds
	As needed	Water plants and use integrated pest management techniques
Tree Maintenance	As needed	Clean up debris in tree pits, mulch, reset bricks, control weeds and pests, water, prune
	Annually	Treat for disease as needed
Tree Planting	As needed	Plant new and replacement trees
Mowing	12 times/year	Mow, remove litter, and edge mowed areas in public right-of-way
Snow Removal	As needed	Clear snow and ice from crosswalks
Street Sweeping	Not specified	Remove debris from curb lines and curbed medians
Sidewalk Repair	As needed	Maintain all sidewalks
Metro Pedestrian Tunnel Maintenance	Daily	Sweep the tunnel, clean handrails, remove trash
	As needed	Pressure clean walls and floors and replace burnt out light bulbs

Source: Annual Agreement by and between Montgomery County, Maryland and Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc., FY23 and BUP.

County staff report BUP's performance meets and often "exceeds" the agreement requirements. For example, BUP staff report trash cans are emptied seven days per week rather than three days per week, trash cans in heavy-traffic areas are emptied multiple times a day as needed, and streets are swept three nights per week although the agreement does not specify frequency.

Maintenance of Optional Method Development Properties. The Planning Board requires optional method development (OMD) properties to receive services from BUP to maintain streetscape amenities such as landscaping and sidewalks in the public right-of-way as a condition of its site plan approval. As recommended by the Office of the County Attorney, BUP does not enter into formal written agreements with optional method developers. The County Attorney reasons that because Section 68 A-4(3) of the County Code provides the County with statutory authority to assess and collect the charges addressed, agreements are not required between optional method developers and BUP.

BUP currently provides maintenance services in the public right-of-way for 42 OMD properties, compared with 36 OMD properties in 2018, and 24 OMD properties in 2013. After a new OMD project is built, BUP's field operations manager visits the property and inventories the amenities to determine the services that BUP will perform. BUP sends this information to the Bethesda Chevy Chase Regional Services Center (BCC-RSC). Additionally, BUP reports quarterly to BCC-RSC's urban district manager on actual services performed.

Groundskeeping for Public Parking Lots and Garages. BUP currently provides groundskeeping services for seven parking lots and nine parking garages in Bethesda (an increase from six parking lots and five parking garages in 2018) under a County contract managed by the Department of Transportation, Division of Parking Management. Under the contract, BUP:

- Maintains turf by mowing, testing soil, fertilizing, controlling weeds, and aerating and overseeding;
- Edges curbs and walkways;
- Maintains tree pits and plant beds by weeding, edging, mulching, and trimming and pruning shrubs, trees, and groundcover;
- Collects litter; and
- Implements insect and disease control measures.

Trash removal and street sweeping in the Wheaton and Silver Spring Urban Districts. The County Code authorizes an urban district corporation to "provide any authorized service to another Corporation or urban district."³⁷ BUP provides trash collection and street sweeping services to the Wheaton and Silver Spring Urban Districts under a joint contract administered by the Mid-County and Silver Spring Regional Services Centers.

BUP collects trash daily from 221 public trash receptacles within the Silver Spring Urban District and on weekends from 62 public trash receptacles in the Wheaton Urban District. BUP also picks up any spilled trash within five feet of the trash receptacle. Finally, BUP sweeps and cleans streets in each district three times per week.

³⁷ County Code § 68A-9 (b).

In FY19 and FY20, the Silver Spring and Wheaton Urban Districts ended their trash removal contract with BUP and brought the services in-house for budget reasons. Both contracts were re-instated in FY21 and remain in force in FY23.

Other Maintenance and Landscaping. The County Code permits BUP to provide services “outside the boundaries of [the] urban district if the service will primarily benefit businesses or residents in the urban district.”³⁸ As such, BUP has entered into formal and informal agreements to maintain Bethesda “gateway” areas and to provide maintenance for private property within the urban district:

- **State Highway Administration.** In 2000, BUP signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the State Highway Administration (SHA) to provide maintenance services in certain roadway medians considered to be “gateways” to the Bethesda Urban District. Since then, BUP and the SHA have extended the MOU three times for a period of five years each. The 2013 agreement slightly extended the limits of the medians BUP maintains. The Wisconsin Avenue medians extend from Pooks Hill Road south to Dorset Avenue. The Bradley Boulevard median extends from Wisconsin Avenue west to Goldsboro Road. The latest agreement extends the term of the MOU through 2028.
- **Imagination Stage.** In accordance with an ongoing contract between BUP and Imagination Stage, BUP provides tree maintenance, bed maintenance, and flower planting services for Imagination Stage, a nonprofit organization located in the urban district.
- **National Institutes of Health (NIH).** BUP provides grounds maintenance at no cost for a green space that NIH owns at the corner of Woodmont and Wisconsin Avenues. According to BUP, it takes on the additional grounds work to ensure the space, which is an important gateway to downtown, is maintained at a level that meets the organization’s standards.

Addressing Community Maintenance Concerns. As described in Table 3-2, BUP frequently works with the County and the broader community to address additional maintenance concerns in the Bethesda Urban District.

³⁸ County Code § 68A-9 (b)(4)

Table 3-2: Examples of BUP's Efforts to Address Community Maintenance Concerns

Issue	Description
Streetlight Maintenance	BUP assists the County DOT with streetlight maintenance by providing a monthly outage report. BUP implemented a GIS system in 2012 with up-to-date streetlight location data to track outages internally and facilitate reporting. BUP also provided DOT with an inventory of streetlights in the urban district that require painting.
Crosswalk Restriping	BUP provides DOT with an annual inventory of crosswalks that need to be restriped or added.
Pothole Repair and Road Maintenance	BUP reports potholes to DOT, and DOT repairs them. BUP also works with DOT to address emergency road maintenance issues, for example sinkholes, by assisting with monitoring and maintenance of temporary repairs. BUP does not receive any funding specifically for this service.
Recycling Collection with Bethesda Green	Bethesda Green aims to promote environmentally friendly, or "green" practices in downtown Bethesda. To this end, Bethesda Green has provided recycling cans to be used in public right of way areas and BUP currently empties the cans.
Rodent Control	BUP provides rodent control in public-right-of-way areas.

b. Ambassador Program

The County Code charges urban district corporations with providing "promotion, organization, and support of cultural, recreational, and business activities."³⁹ BUP's FY23 annual agreement with the County to manage the urban district states that BUP may "conduct...activities to advance the business and residential environment and sense of community in the urban district through such measures as enhanced security...and other community initiatives."⁴⁰

One way BUP achieves these purposes is through the ambassador program, more commonly known as the "Ask Me Team." The ambassadors' responsibilities include:⁴¹

- Providing emergency assistance (e.g., assistance with flat tires or lock outs);
- Giving directions and restaurant recommendations to Bethesda visitors;
- Fielding informational requests about downtown destinations;
- Answering parking and transportation inquiries (e.g., questions about the Bethesda Circulator);

³⁹ County Code § 68A-9 (b)

⁴⁰ FY23 Agreement By and Between Montgomery County, Maryland and Bethesda Urban Partnership, Article I, paragraph 2, July 1, 2022

⁴¹ BUP staff and Bethesda Urban Partnership Inc., 2021-22 Annual Review, pg. 6

- Handling graffiti removal;
- Providing litter collection and servicing full trash cans;
- Interacting daily with downtown retailers;
- Provide logistics and operational support during BUP events;
- Supporting maintenance of galleries and artist workspaces;
- Helping manage the Streeterly on Norfolk Avenue; and
- Notifying other BUP staff or appropriate agencies about emergency maintenance or safety issues.

The Ask Me Team operates Wednesdays through Sundays from 11:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. in November through March, and from 1:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. in April through November. Team members are certified in First Aid, CPR and AED.

All Ask Me Team members use tablets to track issues they refer to BUP's maintenance team as well as their interactions with the public. Table 3-3 presents the number of interactions the Ask Me Team had with five separate groups of individuals in downtown Bethesda between 2019 and 2023. Of note, there are no data from September 2020 through December 2021 because BUP paused data collection during the pandemic and reassigned the Ask Me Team members to other duties.

Table 3-3: Ask Me Team Interactions by Type, 2019 – 2023 (YTD)

Type of Interaction	2019		2020*		2021	2022		2023^	
	#	%	#	%		#	%	#	%
Citizen Contacts/Assists	12,835	60%	3,184	61%	No data	3,646	59%	6,456	64%
Homeless Contacts	1,022	5%	256	5%		372	6%	479	5%
Victim Assist	147	1%	61	1%		67	1%	25	0%
Police/Fire/Rescue Assist	114	1%	46	1%		54	1%	13	0%
Business Contacts	695	3%	205	4%		211	3%	774	8%
Directions/Parking Assist	6,652	31%	1,426	28%		1,782	29%	2,276	23%
Total Interactions	21,465	100%	5,178	100%		6,132	100%	10,023	100%

Source: Bethesda Urban Partnership

*Data are from January through August 2020. Due to the pandemic, BUP paused data collection starting in September 2020 and did not collect any data in 2021.

^2023 data reflect interactions from January through July.

The data show most staff interactions each year are with private citizens (these interactions include casual citizen contacts, citizen assists, and buddy escorts) followed by people requesting directions or parking assistance. After significant declines during the pandemic, the Ask Me Team's interactions with the public are returning to pre-pandemic levels. The number of interactions Ask Me Team members have had in just the first seven months of 2023 is 64% higher than the total number of interactions they had in all of 2022.

c. Bethesda Circulator

The Bethesda Circulator is a free bus service running through downtown Bethesda with 20 stops. The Circulator runs Monday to Friday from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. Appendix B provides a map of the Circulator route. Funding and operational responsibilities for the Bethesda Circulator have changed over the years:

- The service first started in FY01 as the "Bethesda 8 Trolley." From FY01–FY06, Montgomery County Ride-On operated the trolley, funded through subsidies from the State of Maryland and the County's Mass Transit Fund.
- In September 2006, the County added the Bethesda Circulator to the services specified in BUP's Bethesda Transportation Management District (TMD) contract and transferred the funding source to the Bethesda Parking Lot District.⁴²
- In FY09, the County transferred responsibility for operating and funding the Circulator from BUP's TMD contract to BUP's annual agreement with BCC-RSC because at the time, the Circulator primarily served as a parking garage shuttle and downtown residential circulator and only incidentally as a commuter service.

BUP subcontracts the Circulator's service operations and customer service training for drivers to a private party but uses its own in-house staff to provide marketing and maintenance of the signs and benches at Circulator stops.

Circulator ridership data provided in Table 3-4 show that average monthly ridership increased by 94% between 2006 (when BUP began operating the Circulator) and 2019. In 2020, BUP suspended service for two months at the onset of COVID-19, causing average monthly ridership that year to dip to about 28,000 riders.

⁴² The County Code authorizes urban district corporations to offer "specialized transportation services, including jitney service." County Code § 68A-9 (b)(2)

As reflected in the table, the pandemic led to a significant decrease in ridership in 2021 and 2022, leading BUP to remove one bus from its route and place the remaining two buses on a limited schedule. In FY23, BUP put the third Circulator vehicle back on its route and the County restored funding to pre-pandemic levels. Data from the first seven months of 2023 show that average monthly ridership has already increased by 23% from the previous year.

Table 3-4: Average Number of Monthly Circulator Riders, 2006 – 2023 (YTD)

Year	Monthly Riders	% Change, previous year
2006*	18,907	N/A
2007	23,432	24%
2008	22,608	- 4%
2009	21,098	-7%
2010	22,741	8%
2011	22,826	0.4%
2012	25,277	11%
2013	24,964	-1%
2014	29,434	18%
2015	29,516	0.3%
2016	34,766	18%
2017	34,741	-0.1%
2018	34,973	1%
2019	36,722	5%
2020^	27,739	-24%
2021	6,155	-78%
2022	6,769	10%
2023#	8,338	23%

Source: Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc.

*2006 data are from September of that year, when BUP began managing the Circulator, to December.

^2 months of no service due to COVID-19 onset.

#2023 data are for January through July.

3. Marketing

BUP's annual agreement with the County to manage the urban district states that BUP may "plan, coordinate, and manage promotional activities and events that benefit both commercial and residential interests within the urban district."⁴³ The marketing team includes four full-time staff. BUP's marketing division coordinates these types of efforts through general marketing activities promoting downtown Bethesda's restaurants and retailers, special events, social media, and management of the A&E District.

In 2021, BUP underwent its first brand redesign. BUP's previous logo and identity had been in place since 1994. In January 2021, a special committee from BUP's Board began working with Friendly Design in Washington, D.C. on a refreshed look that would better reflect the current character of downtown Bethesda. The new brand keeps BUP's signature red but updates the logo, tagline, and creates new designs for BUP's assets including its fleet of trucks, gateway signs, and uniforms. BUP's new tagline is "A World in One Neighborhood."

a. General Marketing Activities

The BUP marketing division uses a variety of methods to disseminate information about the Bethesda Urban District, including maintaining a website, sending out an e-newsletter, conducting social media outreach, interacting with local media, and publishing written materials promoting the restaurants, retailers, and arts organizations in downtown Bethesda.

BUP's website, redesigned in 2019, describes the Bethesda Urban Partnership and provides information about downtown Bethesda, such as a parking map and information on local shopping, dining, lodging, and arts and culture. Additionally, BUP uses the website to promote its special events or events organized by other Bethesda businesses and organizations. BUP launched a mobile version of its website in October of 2010.

The marketing division publishes an online events calendar that advertises individual events happening in downtown Bethesda. BUP also publishes free booklets and brochures about Bethesda online and in print. BUP distributes booklets and brochures to local businesses in a variety of ways, including monthly deliveries to downtown Bethesda's hotels and residential and commercial concierges, and through its online ordering system. These publications include:

- *Destination Downtown Bethesda*, which provides telephone and address listings for restaurants, retailers, and services;
- *Eat Here*, a restaurant guide for the downtown Bethesda area;
- *The Art of Downtown Bethesda*, a guide to arts in Bethesda;

⁴³ Article I, paragraph 2

- *The Bethesda Circulator flyer*, a map that shows the Circulator route and hours of operation, as well as downtown Bethesda's parking garages and surface lots. The flyer also notifies riders that they can access all this information through the free Bethesda Circulator mobile app.

BUP conducts social media outreach via Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter for both BUP as a whole and for Bethesda Transportation Solutions (BTS), the brand BUP uses to market its transportation management services. BUP uses its social media to spotlight and share content from individual businesses, restaurants, arts organizations, and hotels in Bethesda as well as to promote BUP events. As of this report's writing, BUP has over 7,800 followers on Facebook, over 3,900 followers on Instagram, and over 5,000 followers on X (formally known as Twitter). BUP also distributes a weekly e-newsletter to approximately 13,400 subscribers.

BUP relied heavily on its online presence during the height of COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021. BUP used its social media platforms to quickly and frequently share important information to Bethesda residents, business owners, and visitors, including updates on County health restrictions, new virtual events, and local business promotions.⁴⁴

BUP also organizes cooperative marketing events that give local businesses opportunities for free promotion. For example, BUP partnered with five local fitness studios to offer free classes to the public in downtown parks during the summer of 2023.

Finally, BUP maintains a database of 250 volunteers to recruit for assistance at events. For example, staff report that in any given year, between 150-200 people volunteer for events like Taste of Bethesda (see description below).

b. Special Events

BUP organizes several major events in downtown Bethesda annually. Altogether, these events typically attract over 100,000 attendees. However, COVID-19 forced BUP to reimagine or cancel many of its special events in 2020 and 2021. As described below,⁴⁵ BUP moved many of its annual events to virtual platforms during the height of the pandemic and introduced new initiatives to safely engage the community while helping to support local businesses. Most of BUP's in-person events returned in 2022.

- *Taste of Bethesda*, an annual October event that gathers thousands of visitors to sample food from local restaurants, was canceled in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19. *Taste of Bethesda* was scheduled and planned for 2022 but canceled due to Hurricane Ian.

⁴⁴ Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc. 2021-22 Annual Review, pg.13

⁴⁵ Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc. 2021-22 Annual Review and information from BUP staff.

- *Imagination Bethesda*, an annual children's art festival, was canceled permanently in 2020. It will be replaced by additional activities for children and families such as *Concerts for Kids* and an expanded *Winter Wonderland* program (described below).
- *Bethesda Outdoor Movies*, three summer evenings of free movies shown in the Woodmont Triangle area, was canceled in 2020 and 2021, and returned in 2022.
- *Local Writer's Showcase*, a two-day event that honors the winners of the annual writing contests BUP holds in partnership with *Bethesda Magazine*, The Writer's Center, and The Trawick Foundation, was held online in 2020 and 2021. The event returned to in-person readings and awards ceremonies in 2022 and 2023.
- *Bethesda Summer Concerts*, free concerts during the summer months, were suspended in 2020 but returned in 2021 to the Streeteries on Norfolk Avenue on Friday evenings. In the spring of 2020 and winter of 2021, BUP offered Facebook Live Concerts every Thursday from its Facebook page.
- *Winter Wonderland*, an annual December event that includes a professional choral concert and performances by children's groups, was canceled in 2020. A smaller version of the event was held in 2021, and the event returned to in-person and expanded in 2022.
- *Yappy Hour* features two pop-up dog parks, one for small dog breeds and one for large dog breeds, as well as live music and food, beer, and wine provided by Bethesda restaurants. The event was not held in 2020, but resumed in 2021, 2022, and 2023.

d. New Initiatives

Within the last five years, BUP has introduced the following new initiatives:

- The *Triangle Art Studios* opened in November 2018 through a partnership with the Montgomery County and the property developer, Duball.⁴⁶ The studios are home to three local artists and a small retail gallery space.
- The *Bethesda Streeteries* opened in June 2020 to create more outdoor seating for restaurants during COVID-19. BUP partnered with DOT to open two streetry locations, one at Woodmont Avenue and one on Norfolk Avenue.⁴⁷ The initiative became very popular with restaurants, residents, and visitors. In surveys conducted by BUP in 2021 and 2022, 72% of people surveyed said they visited the Norfolk Avenue Streetry either frequently (a few times a week) or somewhat frequently (once a week), and 60% said they visited the Woodmont Avenue Streetry between once and several times a week. BUP has made the Norfolk Avenue Streetry a permanent gathering place for dining, listening to live music, and special events, and has plans for expansion.

⁴⁶ Duball financed the studios as part of its public amenity space required through Optional Method Development.

⁴⁷ BUP reports that the Woodmont Avenue Streetry was managed by Federal Realty, who owns a majority of the property in the Woodmont Triangle area. The Norfolk Avenue Streetry was, and still is, managed by BUP.

- *Savor Bethesda Restaurant Week* was created in October 2020 to promote and support restaurants during COVID-19. The program offered special dine-in and take-out deals to encourage patrons to support local restaurants. *Savor Bethesda* was held again in July 2021, February 2022, and February 2023, and will continue annually.
- *Bethesda Bucks* is an e-gift card that can be used in participating downtown Bethesda restaurants and retailers. BUP reports more than 60 businesses participate in the initiative, which is promoted several times a year.
- *Concerts for Kids* is a series of concerts featuring musicians that perform kid-friendly songs, games, and other activities for local children and families. The concerts will be held at the Norfolk Avenue Streeterly on four Fridays in June and July of 2023.

e. Arts and Entertainment District

The Bethesda Urban District first received State of Maryland designation as an Arts and Entertainment District in 2002. It was re-designated in 2012 and again in 2022. The A&E District is a separate non-profit organization with the ability to raise its own funds. However, BUP's marketing division manages the A&E District as part of its mission to promote commercial interests and program public interest activities.⁴⁸

BUP's activities related to the Arts and Entertainment District involve:

- Providing information to artists who are interested in working and living in Bethesda;
- Participating in annual meetings organized by the State of Maryland for all Arts and Entertainment Districts;
- Submitting an annual report of its activities to the State;
- Planning, promoting, and managing arts events and initiatives;
- Managing Gallery B, a space that opened in October 2011 where local and regional artists can display their work at reduced rates; and
- Managing Studio B and Triangle Art Studios, subsidized studio spaces that serve as both work and exhibit areas for resident, local artists that opened in 2014 and 2018, respectively.

Just as with BUP's special events described above, many of the A&E District events were canceled or changed in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19. Events organized by BUP include:

- *Bernard/Ebb Songwriting Awards*, an annual musical performance contest awarding a \$10,000 prize to a talented songwriter, was canceled in 2020, not planned in 2021, and returned in-person in 2022;

⁴⁸ County Code § 68A-3(b)

- *Bethesda Film Fest*, a documentary film festival for regional filmmakers was held online in 2020 and 2021. The Film Fest returned to in-person screenings in 2022 and 2023;
- *Bethesda Fine Arts Festival*, a two-day event in May that allows 150 artists from 25 states to sell their work and participate in a juried competition, was canceled in 2020 and BUP created an online Facebook gallery for that year's participating artists. The festival was not planned in 2021, but returned in 2022 and 2023;
- *Bethesda Painting Awards*, a juried art competition for about 350 regional painters that includes cash prizes and an opportunity to have their work displayed in Bethesda, pushed its 16th annual finalists' showcase to October 2020, but returned to the competition's typical June dates in 2021;
- *The Trawick Prize: Bethesda Contemporary Art Awards*, a juried competition for about 400 artists that includes cash prizes and an opportunity to have their work displayed in Bethesda;
- *Bethesda Art Walk*, a previously monthly event that promotes local art galleries, was not held in 2020 and returned in the fall of 2021. The Art Walk is now held quarterly;
- *Play in a Day*, an opportunity for playwrights, directors, and actors to write, direct, and perform a play in 24 hours, was held in February 2020, but has not been planned since 2021; and
- *Paint the Town*, a public art initiative that awards \$50,000 to a local artist to design a large-scale mural on a designated site within Bethesda. Recently installed murals include:
 - The Bethesdan Hotel (2019);
 - Montgomery County Garage #35, corner of Rugby and Woodmont Avenues (2020); and
 - Montgomery County Garage #11, corner of Old Georgetown Road and Woodmont Avenue (2022).

BUP reports that these events attract over 30,000 people and over 1,000 artists annually. BUP raises money for these events through sponsorships and fees paid by participating artists and organizations.

The *Paint the Town* program is funded through a partnership with DOT and financial support from local developers, the Maryland State Arts Council and the M-NCPPC.

The cash prizes for the Bethesda Painting Awards, the Trawick Prize, and the Bernard Ebb Songwriting Awards have been endowed by an individual donor.

4. Bethesda Transportation Solutions

Bethesda Transportation Solutions (BTS) was established in 2000 and manages the Bethesda Transportation Management District (TMD) under a contract administered by Commuter Services in the County Department of Transportation (DOT). BTS includes three full-time staff.

a. Monitoring Parking, Pedestrian, Bicycle and Commuter Trends

BUP's Transportation Management contract with DOT specifies that BUP must:

- Develop and maintain an inventory of public and private parking supply, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, transit services, and utilization of these facilities and services; and
- Complete a periodic commuter survey of employees and residents in the Bethesda TMD and seek to attain an 80% participation rate.

Every year BUP must submit either a biennial report (in even-numbered years) or an interim report (in odd-numbered years) to DOT. BUP submitted and the County approved its FY18–FY19 biennial report in March of 2020. In 2022, BUP submitted a draft of its FY20–FY21 biennial report, in accordance with its contract. This draft is under review by Commuter Services staff in DOT.

BUP reports it has completed the FY22 commuter survey of employees and residents and that Commuter Services staff in DOT are analyzing the results.

b. Promoting Alternate Modes of Transportation

BTS works with employers and employees in Bethesda to promote alternate modes of transportation (i.e., modes other than single occupancy vehicles). According to BUP's contract, the organization must:

- Assist employers with 25 employees or more to develop traffic mitigation plans, as required by law;⁴⁹
- Market alternate modes of transportation to employers, employees, and residents and provide carpool and vanpool ride matching services;
- Work with businesses that are relocating to Bethesda to help them implement plans to reduce the number of single-occupancy vehicles;
- Provide carpool and vanpool ride matching services through the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' regional Commuter Connections Ridematching and the Guaranteed Ride Home programs; and
- Track which property owners must pay the TMD fee and provide DOT with billing information.

BUP's contract with DOT authorizes BUP to conduct marketing and outreach on alternate modes of transportation to employers and their employees and all multi-family residential communities within the Bethesda TMD. BUP markets alternate transportation methods using a variety of strategies, described in Table 3-5.

⁴⁹ County Code § 42A-24

Table 3-5: BUP Marketing and Outreach Efforts on Alternate Modes of Transportation

Type	Description
Website	The Bethesda Transportation Solutions website provides information about public transit, biking, parking, and pedestrian safety. It also provides information about a variety of specific programs for commuters, including carpools and vanpools, commuter rail/bus, the guaranteed ride home program, park-and-ride lots, and telecommuting. For employers, the site highlights County laws on transportation management, employer tax incentives, and information on transit benefits programs.
Commuter Information Days	BTS staff host events in the lobbies of commercial office and multi-family residential buildings during the morning and/or evening commute. Staff distribute information about alternate forms of transportation and commuter programs to residents.
Commuter Solutions Newsletter	BTS distributes a monthly transportation management newsletter with information about commuter programs, tips on alternate modes of transportation, and information about events.
Events	BTS coordinates events specific to downtown Bethesda and as part of larger regional initiatives. The annual Walk & Ride Challenge calls on teams of workers in downtown Bethesda to compete to win by walking the most steps over the course of three weeks. Due to COVID-19, the 2020 Challenge encouraged teleworkers to incorporate walking into their day and record their steps. BTS's 2021 Bike to Work Day was changed to an informal event at the Norfolk Avenue Streeter, but still attracted 374 registrants. In 2022 there were 443 participants and in 2023 there were 471 participants. ⁵⁰ BUP also participates in World Car Free Day in coordination with the County DOT. BTS collaborated with DOT to promote new initiatives in 2020-21, including the County Bike Match program, The Shared Street and Closed Street Initiatives, Bethesda adult bicycle education classes, Vision Zero, and future separated bicycle lanes in Bethesda. ⁵¹
Advertising/Sponsorship	BTS uses banners throughout the Bethesda TMD to promote its Walk & Ride event. It also periodically places advertisements in Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce publications and participates as a sponsor of their annual golf tournament, where it promotes Bike to Work Day.

Source: BTS, Bethesda Urban Partnership.

⁵⁰ Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc., 2020-21 Annual Review, pg. 18

⁵¹ Ibid.

BTS also disseminates information about current and future bicycle infrastructure in the Bethesda TMD through its newsletter, social media channels, website, and community events. BTS helps coordinate bike lane updates from DOT to the BUP Board of Directors and the Bethesda TMD Advisory Committee.

The Downtown Bethesda Sector Plan, approved and adopted in May 2017, updates the non-auto driver mode share (NADMS) goal for Bethesda to 55% for employees and residents combined.⁵² According to BUP's FY18-FY19 biennial report on transportation management, 37% of commuters used alternate modes of transportation in fiscal year 2018 (including those who teleworked and worked on a compressed schedule).⁵³ This percentage has increased in the last five years, in large part due to the prevalence of teleworking during the pandemic. According to initial results from DOT's 2022 Commuter Survey of employers and residents,⁵⁴ 52% of people commuting into Bethesda (employees) and 64% of people commuting out of Bethesda (residents) used alternate modes of transportation in 2022.

BUP's FY18–FY19 biennial report states that in FY19, BTS helped 134 businesses prepare annual reports for their Traffic Mitigation Plans.⁵⁵ According to BTS staff, the number of companies required to file annual reports has decreased since FY20 because the pandemic caused many to move out of Bethesda, close, or reduce their company size to less than 25 employees. Additionally, DOT allowed many companies to reduce or pause their annual report submissions altogether during the pandemic. BTS staff report DOT has recently notified employers of the 2023 Annual Report deadline. Employers must file submissions online and will now be asked to include formal telework plans in their reports.

5. Other Services

a. Enhancing Safety and Security

The County Code states that an urban district should “enhance the safety and security of an area.”⁵⁶ BUP's agreement with the County to manage the urban district states that BUP must “implement a method to service after-hours Police and Department of Transportation requests for street cleaning and removal of road blockages within the urban district.”⁵⁷

⁵² Downtown Bethesda Sector Plan, 2017

⁵³ Bethesda Transportation Management District Biennial Report FY2018-FY2019, Bethesda Transportation Solutions, March 2020, pg. 27.

⁵⁴ BUP notes that 2022 data are raw numbers and that DOT staff are working to blend data to portray the commuter mode share for employees and residents more accurately.

⁵⁵ BUP also helped 30 developers prepare Traffic Mitigation Agreements in FY2019. Traffic Mitigation Agreements are required of developers wanting to build in Downtown Bethesda. The agreements specify the required on-site amenities for encouraging alternate modes of transportation (i.e., bike racks, showers, locker rooms, and carsharing/bikesharing spaces, EV charging stations). Bethesda Transportation Management District Biennial Report FY2018-FY2019, pg. 25.

⁵⁶ County Code § 68A-3(b)

⁵⁷ Article I, paragraph 5.

The Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) District 2 Station and Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) Battalion 2 report a high degree of collaboration with BUP. Examples include:

- BUP responds to MCPD requests for assistance with clearing the roadway of debris related to storms or vehicle collisions;
- MCPD and BUP cooperate to close and re-open streets for special events;
- BUP and the District 2 police unit for the Central Business District communicate using mobile phones, allowing them to notify each other when there is a situation that needs attention; and
- BUP staff participate in monthly meetings of the Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce's Public Safety Council with MCPD and MCFRS to coordinate emergency response in Bethesda and proactively discuss safety issues in the community.

b. Supporting County Departments' Relationships with Community Business Partners and Residents

BUP assists County Government departments and other partners by liaising with businesses in downtown Bethesda regarding issues that may affect them. For example:

- BUP assists the County DOT in obtaining input from and providing information to businesses regarding changes to lane markings, time limits on parking meters, and other issues;
- BUP assists MCFRS and MCPD in liaising with the business community concerning gas leaks, homelessness, and other safety and security issues; and
- BUP assists the Montgomery County Planning Department with educating Bethesda residents about their ongoing or upcoming initiatives, such as public art projects.

B. Strategic Planning

In 1998, OLO completed an evaluation of the Bethesda Urban Partnership. Based on OLO's report and recommendations, the Council requested that BUP prepare a five-year strategic plan for the next reauthorization period. Since then, BUP has prepared five consecutive strategic plans for 2004–2009, 2009–2014, 2014–2019, 2019–2024, and 2024–2029. This section describes BUP's progress on the goals in the 2019–2024 Strategic Plan as well as the new strategic goals and strategies in its 2024–2029 Strategic Plan.

1. Progress on the 2019-2024 Strategic Plan Goals

BUP's 2019–2024 Strategic Plan established a set of strategic goals and objectives for four core areas: The Bethesda Brand, Beautification, Arts & Entertainment, and Mobility. Table 3-6 lists these goals along with the major actions BUP has taken to accomplish these goals.

While BUP’s major responsibilities have not changed since 2019, its actions, particularly during the pandemic, show that it has expanded and adapted its services to meet emerging community needs. See Appendix C for BUP’s 2024–2029 Strategic Plan.

Table 3-6: Bethesda Urban Partnership Strategic Goals, 2019–2024 and Actions

Core Area #1: The Bethesda Brand
<p>Strategic Goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Develop a clearly defined Bethesda Brand that is communicated regionally and globally.2. Enhance communication by BUP with constituents and stakeholders.3. Create a shared sense of place. <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Updated the BUP Brand and created a new BUP logo for all uniforms, vehicles, BUP marketing materials, social media and more.• Created a monthly newsletter that highlights BUP’s efforts and employees and the “Local Business Spotlight” to highlight downtown Bethesda retailers and restaurants during COVID.• Created special videos of downtown Bethesda’s retailers for social media in 2023.• Communicated COVID-related information and updates to all downtown Bethesda businesses and residents.• Partnered with County DOT to create Bethesda “Streeteries” to help businesses succeed during COVID and hired a consultant to design a permanent streeteries on the public activity corridor along Norfolk Avenue.

[TABLE CONTINUES ON THE NEXT PAGE]

Core Area #2: Beautification

Strategic Goals:

1. Beautification through art.
2. Enhance branding and wayfinding.
3. Ensure urban spaces are activated and attractive.
4. Update streetscape guidelines.
5. Focus on sidewalk and crosswalk enhancements.
6. Secure additional funding through targeted fundraising efforts.

Actions:

- Installed four public murals at the Bethesda Metro Station, Bethesdan Hotel, Garage 35, and Garage 11.
- Updated BUP's branding with new logos and artwork, updated BUP's website in 2019, and began work with County DOT to install outdoor touchscreen kiosks.
- Partnered with County DOT to create Bethesda "Streeteries" and enhanced and expanded the Summer Concert Series to the Norfolk Avenue Streeteries in 2021.
- Partnered with M-NCPPC to beautify Cheltenham Park and Chase Avenue Park and create "Yappy Hour" pop-up dog park events in Elm St Park.
- Worked with M-NCPPC during the Bethesda Downtown Master Plan Process to update and rewrite the Downtown Bethesda Streetscape Guidelines.
- Provides County DOT with an annual inventory of crosswalks that need to be restriped or added.
- Solicited and secured sponsorships from private entities to create new events, programs and initiatives or improve current programs.

Core Area #3: Arts and Entertainment

Strategic Goals:

1. Beautification through art.
2. Promote economic development through art.
3. Incorporate art into the streetscape.
4. Focus on fundraising to help support projects and programs.

Actions:

- Installed four public murals around the downtown.
- Drew tens of thousands of visitors to public art events like the Summer Concerts, Bethesda Art Walk, and the Bethesda Fine Arts Festival who also patronize local restaurants and contribute to the local economy.
- All A&E District events, programs or initiatives are funded by private donations, sponsorships, or other outside sources of revenue.

Core Area #4: Mobility

Strategic Goals:

1. Enhance mobility infrastructure throughout the downtown.
2. Commission a new Districtwide Wayfinding and Civic Identity Master Plan.
3. Progress toward meeting the Downtown Bethesda Plan's Non-Auto Driver Mode Share (NADMS) goals.
4. Activate Norfolk Avenue as a main street.
5. Mitigate the impact of construction on constituents.
6. Explore the expansion of the Bethesda Circulator.

Actions:

- Promoted separated bike lanes installed by County DOT on Woodmont Ave., Bethesda Ave., and Willow Ln. and educated the public about DOT's plans to add future bike lanes and add pedestrian safety improvements at seven intersections.
- Advocated for wider sidewalks, more bike racks and more electric vehicle charging stations in new construction projects, installed EV charging stations in public garages, and added additional car sharing vehicles throughout the downtown.
- Refinished Circulator bus benches and working with the contractor to purchase electric buses.
- Partnered with DOT to install outdoor touchscreen kiosks.
- The NADMS increased to 50% in 2019 from 37% in 2017; 2022 data show a NADMS of 52% for employees and 64% for residents.
- Initiated a working group with DOT, Department of Permitting Services, the Regional Services Center, and the MD State Highway Administration to review construction plans to mitigate impacts on traffic and pedestrians.
- Created a GIS map layer to identify lane and sidewalk closures/detours and sends out community alerts when there are construction impacts.

Source: BUP and Bethesda Urban Partnership Strategic Plan 2019-2024.

2. 2024-2029 Strategic Plan

In July 2023, the BUP Board of Directors completed its strategic plan for 2024–2029. BUP contracted with Progressive Urban Management Associates (P.U.M.A.) to support its six-month strategic planning process. Overall, P.U.M.A. captured feedback from more than 1,000 stakeholders through focus groups and an online survey.⁵⁸

This feedback indicated that stakeholders are generally pleased with BUP and gave its programs and services favorable ratings. Stakeholders also identified areas of improvement, including creating more public spaces, protecting and promoting small businesses, creating more evening entertainment options, deterring crime, and improving the Bethesda Metro Station experience.⁵⁹ BUP's 2024–2029 strategic plan is attached as Appendix C.

As Table 3-7 below shows, the plan organizes BUP's strategic efforts into three categories that represent the organization's fundamental areas of work – environment, economy, and experience. The plan identifies goals and strategies for each category which also align with BUP's organizational core values – service, stewardship, and spark. In addition to the new goals and strategies outlined in the table, BUP's 2024-2029 strategic plan updates the organization's vision and mission statements.

Table 3-7: Bethesda Urban Partnership Strategic Goals and Strategies, 2024–2029

Goal #1: Environment - <i>Foster a clean, safe, and green environment</i>
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Cleaning and maintenance – *stewardship*

- Continue to manage a clean and well-maintained public realm.
- Remain vigilant with sustainability efforts in public realm maintenance and beautification.
- Ensure sidewalk infrastructure and public realm furnishings are hazard free and in top condition.

Public Safety – *service*

- Work with MCPD to implement public safety measures in downtown, including but not limited to, evaluating the feasibility of bolstering downtown's officer presence.
- Evaluate strategies to fortify security camera network and other technologies to enhance safety.

Beautification – *spark*

- Enhance downtown Bethesda's landscaping with free-standing planters and flowers and ground cover in tree wells and other public areas as applicable.
- Multiply downtown's tree canopy, with developer support, with new trees and help existing trees to grow and flourish.

⁵⁸ Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc., *Five Year Strategic Plan 2024-2029*, July 2023, pg. 4.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pg. 11.

Goal #2: Economy - Support continued economic vitality throughout downtown

Programming and Events – *stewardship*

- Continue to provide and enhance a diverse calendar of year-round events.
- Activate downtown's public spaces to encourage small-scale, ongoing use and promote these activations to community members.
- Explore ways to create evening and nighttime entertainment options tailored to residents and visitors.

Mobility and Access – *service*

- Continue operation of the Circulator and implement tactics to increase ridership.
- Collaborate with partners to improve the Metro Station experience.
- Enhance pedestrian safety along Wisconsin Avenue.
- Establish clear connections between Bethesda's two main restaurant and retail areas – Bethesda Row and Woodmont Triangle.
- Identify and promote links to surrounding neighborhoods and the Greater Washington, D.C. region.
- Support Montgomery County's curbside management efforts as needed, to mitigate challenges with loading and unloading.

The Arts – *spark*

- Integrate more murals and public art installations throughout downtown – that are diverse and varied and help create a unique sense of place.
- Continue to incubate the arts by offering affordable and attractive spaces for artists to both produce and display their artwork.
- Collaborate with property owners and the arts community to fill vacant storefronts and office lobbies with temporary or permanent arts installations or pop-up activations.

Goal #3: Experience - Ensure a welcoming experience that is unique and memorable

Marketing and Communications – *stewardship*

- Be intentional in celebrating BUP successes and elevate the public's knowledge of BUP and its programs.
- Provide more communications about BUP initiatives and programs.
- More actively promote downtown's businesses.
- Increase connection and expand communication with residents in and adjacent to downtown.

Small Business Support – *service*

- Promote, encourage, and find ways to increase and support local businesses.
- Create more evening and nightlife entertainment options and activities.
- Advocate and support efforts to fill downtown's missing business types that the community strongly desire (e.g., a bookstore).

Community-Building – *spark*

- Further establish the Norfolk Avenue Streetery as a permanent and activated hub for the community.
- Utilize current parks and Norfolk Avenue Streetery for more activations; create new public gathering spaces as needed.
- Advance efforts to create a downtown community hub/center.
- Evaluate permanent solutions to establish a Bethesda dog park.
- Encourage broader housing options to meet the needs of varying demographics and income levels.

Source: Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc., *Five Year Strategic Plan 2024-2029*, July 2023, pgs. 15-17

Chapter 4. Bethesda Urban Partnership's Finances

This chapter describes BUP's revenues and expenditures for the five-year period since the last Council reauthorization in FY19. The chapter is organized as follows:

- **Section A** describes BUP's expenditures from FY19-FY23;
- **Section B** presents BUP's County and non-County revenue sources from FY19-FY23;
- **Section C** explains the Bethesda Urban District Fund and Bethesda Parking Lot District Fund, which fund BUP's contracts with the County; and
- **Section D** discusses BUP's Arts and Entertainment District budget.

Summary of BUP's Finances

- BUP's FY23 budget was approximately \$5.2 million dollars. BUP's largest division, Field Operations, accounts for over half its FY23 expenditures.
- BUP received approximately \$5.4 million in revenue in FY23, 94% of which (\$5 million) came from County sources.
- BUP's largest source of revenue is its agreement with the County to manage the Bethesda Urban District. In FY23, the County allocated \$3.1 million to BUP for urban district services and an additional \$1 million to manage the Bethesda Circulator, representing 81% of BUP's County revenue. Revenue from this agreement funds BUP's Field Operations' services (e.g., maintenance and landscaping), Ask Me Team activities, and Marketing and Special Events' activities to promote Bethesda.
- Funding for BUP's agreement with the County to provide urban district services comes from the Bethesda Urban District. Over the five-year period, the primary source of revenue for the Bethesda Urban District has been transfers from the Bethesda Parking Lot District (PLD).
- BUP also holds contracts with the County to manage the Bethesda Transportation Management District (TMD), to provide groundskeeping services at public parking lots and garages in Bethesda, and to provide trash collection and street sweeping services in the Wheaton and Silver Spring Urban Districts.
- BUP's non-County revenue, which comprised 6% of its revenues in FY23, includes event income and sponsorships, Bethesda Circulator advertising, and contracts with non-County entities to provide maintenance services.

A. Expenditures

In FY23, BUP expended approximately \$5.2 million dollars in six general budget categories: (1) field operations; (2) marketing and special events; (3) transportation management; (4) internal operations; (5) arts and entertainment district funds; and (6) reserve for capital equipment, special projects, and operations. Figure 4-1 below shows Field Operations, BUP's largest division, accounted for over half of BUP's FY23 expenditures.

Figure 4-1: FY23 Bethesda Urban Partnership Expenditures by Category (Actual)

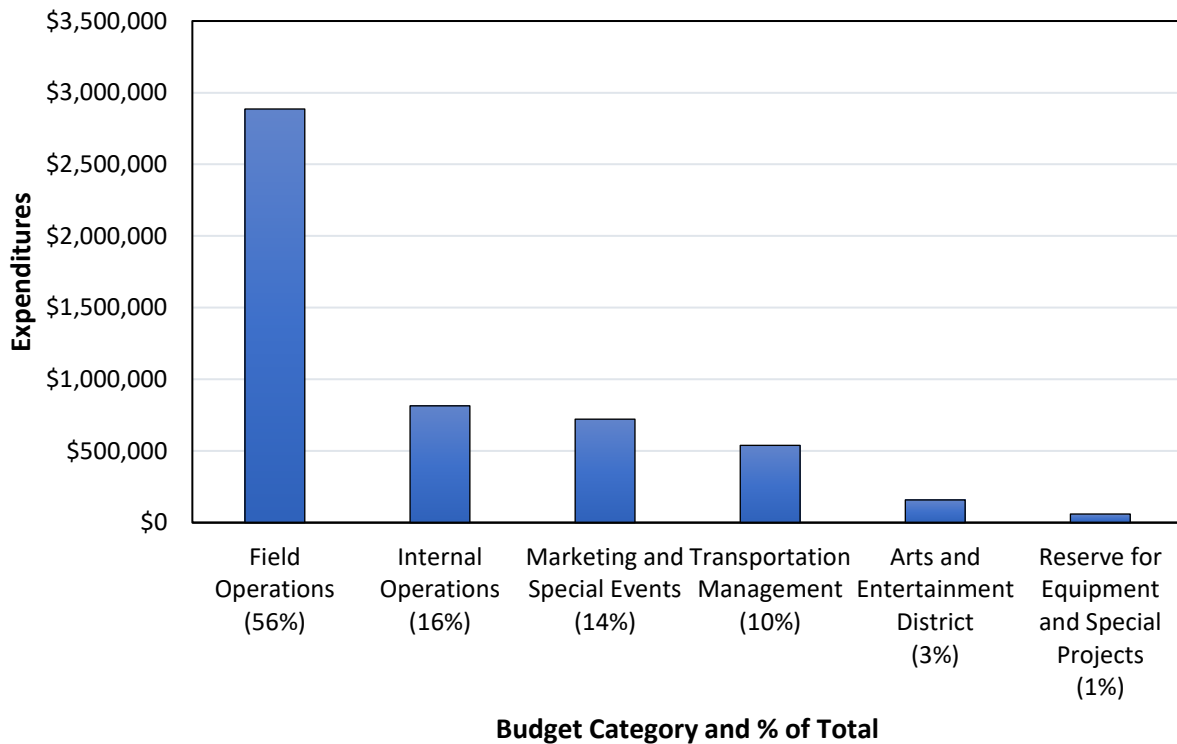


Table 4-1 summarizes BUP's expenditures by category between FY19 and FY23 and provides a detailed breakdown of its field operations, marketing and special events, and transportation management divisions. Between FY19 and FY22, BUP's total expenditures decreased from approximately \$5.0 million to \$4.8 million, largely due to reductions in programs and services during the pandemic. Data show that in FY23, expenditures increased in every budget category over the previous fiscal year.

BUP notes that its reserve for capital equipment, special projects, and operations has grown in the last four years largely because extremely low inventory of trucks in the market have made it difficult to purchase new vehicles for its field operations division. BUP also notes that it sometimes uses its reserve to augment County funds if the costs for replacing equipment in the urban district exceed the County's allocation (e.g., environmentally friendly planters).

Table 4-1: Bethesda Urban Partnership Expenditures, FY19 – FY23 (Actuals, \$000s)

Budget Category	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
Field Operations	\$2,816	\$2,402	\$2,320	\$2,409	\$2,886
Bethesda Circulator	\$1,110	\$879	\$709	\$735	\$1,050
Overhead	\$861	\$792	\$839	\$760	\$864
Streetscape/Landscape Maintenance	\$411	\$386	\$423	\$519	\$557
Ambassador Program	\$225	\$237	\$218	\$222	\$221
Sidewalk Repairs and Maintenance	\$162	\$76	\$101	\$125	\$112
Tree Care and Special Maintenance Projects	\$47	\$32	\$30	\$48	\$82
Marketing and Special Events	\$805	\$823	\$684	\$685	\$722
Overhead	\$469	\$509	\$504	\$525	\$537
Events	\$222	\$207	\$113	\$99	\$138
Communications	\$114	\$107	\$67	\$61	\$47
Transportation Management	\$568	\$579	\$587	\$552	\$539
Overhead	\$527	\$538	\$552	\$512	\$492
Direct Services	\$41	\$41	\$35	\$40	\$47
Internal Operations	\$589	\$701	\$711	\$761	\$815
Arts and Entertainment District	\$171	\$102	\$64	\$140	\$158
Reserve for Capital Equipment, Special Projects, and Operations	\$99	\$47	\$19	\$26	\$60
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$5,048	\$4,653	\$4,384	\$4,808	\$5,180

Source: Bethesda Urban Partnership

B. Revenue

The Bethesda Urban Partnership receives revenue from County and non-County sources. This section describes BUP's revenue sources and shows how they have changed over the last five fiscal years. As Table 4-2 shows, BUP received approximately \$5.4 million in revenue in FY23, 94% of which (\$5 million) came from County sources. The County Attorney has determined that BUP may retain funds it receives from non-County sources in a reserve account established for the replacement of capital assets.

Table 4-2: Bethesda Urban Partnership Revenue by Type, FY19 – FY23 (Actuals, \$000s)

Revenue Category	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
County Contracts					
Bethesda Urban District Services*	\$4,379	\$3,777	\$3,650	\$3,665	\$4,128
Bethesda Transportation Management District Services	\$603	\$618	\$614	\$629	\$639
Wheaton/Silver Spring Street Sweeping and Trash Removal	\$83	\$82	\$212	\$294	\$270
Groundskeeping at Public Parking Lots and Garages	\$26	\$26	\$30	\$29	\$29
Other County Revenue					
Special Approp. - Winterization of Norfolk Ave. Streetery	-	-	\$175	-	-
Subtotal	\$5,091	\$4,503	\$4,681	\$4,617	\$5,066
Non-County Revenue					
Event Income/Sponsorship	\$360	\$261	\$102	\$190	\$202
Circulator Advertising	\$30	\$23	\$18	\$18	\$18
Maintenance on State Roads	\$49	\$36	\$36	\$36	\$38
Miscellaneous	\$37	\$17	\$39	\$9	\$63
Subtotal	\$476	\$337	\$195	\$253	\$321
TOTAL REVENUE	\$5,567	\$4,840	\$4,876	\$4,870	\$5,387
County % of Total	91%	93%	96%	95%	94%
Non-County % of Total	9%	7%	4%	5%	6%

Source: Bethesda Urban Partnership

*Bethesda Urban District Services contract amounts from FY19-FY23 include funds for the Bethesda Circulator; the FY19 contract amount also includes funds for the Rock Spring Circulator.

1. County Revenue

BUP receives funding from the County via five contracts to provide specific services in Bethesda and in other urban districts. In FY21, BUP received a special appropriation from the County Council to winterize the Bethesda Streetery along Norfolk Avenue.

The following table summarizes each of BUP's contracts and/or agreements with the County.

Table 4-3: Summary of BUP's Contracts and/or Agreements with the County

County Contract/Agreement	Funded by	Services covered	Admin.	% of County Revenue
Bethesda Urban District Services	Bethesda Urban District Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BUP's field operations • Ask Me Team activities • Marketing and special events activities 	BCC-RSC	81%
Bethesda Circulator	Mass Transit Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulator contractor expenses • Marketing 		
Transportation Management District Services	Mass Transit Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BUP's annual commuter surveys • Ride matching efforts 	DOT	12%
Street Sweeping and Trash Collection in Silver Spring & Wheaton	Silver Spring & Wheaton Urban District Funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each linear curb mile of street cleaned • Each trash receptacle serviced 	Silver Spring & Mid-County RSCs	5%
Groundskeeping Services at Public Parking Lots and Garages	Bethesda Parking Lot District (PLD) Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BUP's maintenance and landscaping activities at lots and garages 	DOT	1%

a. Agreement to provide Bethesda Urban District Services

BUP's largest source of revenue is an agreement to manage the Bethesda Urban District. The Bethesda Chevy Chase Regional Services Center (BCC-RSC) administers this agreement. In FY23, BUP's revenue from this agreement was approximately \$3.1 million, with an additional \$1 million in funding for the Bethesda Circulator. BUP uses revenue from this agreement to fund BUP's Field Operations' services (e.g., maintenance and landscaping), Ask Me Team activities, and Marketing and Special Events' activities to promote Bethesda. The County's agreement with BUP for urban district services includes the Circulator service.

The BCC-RSC makes payments on this agreement from the Bethesda Urban District Fund (described beginning on page 46), but the Circulator's expenses are charged to the Mass Transit Fund. At the end of each fiscal year, the County must transfer any unspent money budgeted in the urban district fund for BUP's agreement to the County General Fund.

The County's agreement with BUP to provide Bethesda Urban District services specifies an annual funding allocation for the Bethesda Circulator. The agreement permits BUP to raise additional revenue through the sale of advertising space on Circulator vehicles. BUP maintains this revenue in a separate reserve account since it must be used to cover operational expenses to fund or enhance the Circulator's

services. In FY19, BUP received additional County funds for a bridge contract with RMA Chauffeured Transportation to run the Rock Spring Circulator, a free shuttle that serviced the Rock Spring Office Park. The County discontinued funding after one year because service overlapped with existing Ride On bus schedules and ridership decreased with the departure of Marriott Headquarters.

Table 4-4 displays financial data for the Bethesda Circulator from FY19 through FY23, including the County's annual funding allocation and BUP's advertising revenue and marketing expenses. The data show:

- Over the five-year period, BUP's total operational expenses for the Circulator regularly exceeded the County's annual funding allocation.
- County funding dipped by 21% in FY20 and again by 18% in FY21. County funding increased by just 2% in FY22 but then jumped by 45% in FY23, bringing the County's allocation back to nearly FY19 levels.
- From FY19 to FY23, overall revenue from Circulator advertising declined by 40%.
- In FY21, BUP reduced total operational expenses for the Circulator by cutting spending on marketing/additional expenses by 86%. This resulted in a surplus in FY21.

According to BUP, the County reduced its funding allocation from FY20 to FY22 because Circulator ridership reduced significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the County's request, BUP removed one of its three Circulator buses from its route and placed the remaining two buses on a limited schedule. BUP reports that the reduction in service also explains the decline in advertising revenue each year starting in FY21. BUP lowered advertising rates during this period because buses were running on a limited schedule and ridership was down significantly. In FY23, BUP put the third Circulator vehicle back on its route and the County restored funding to pre-pandemic levels.

Table 4-4: Bethesda Circulator Revenue and Expenses, FY19 – FY23 (Actuals)

Circulator Contract	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
Annual Funding Allocation	\$1,092,827	\$865,487	\$709,240	\$723,838	\$1,046,575
Advertising Revenue	\$30,000	\$22,500	\$18,000	\$18,000	\$18,000
Total Revenue	\$1,122,827	\$887,987	\$727,240	\$741,838	\$1,064,575
Contractor Operational Exp.	\$1,109,924	\$878,689	\$708,738	\$734,550	\$1,049,925
Marketing/Additional Expenses	\$13,410	\$24,253	\$3,444	\$13,136	\$17,092
Total Operational Expenses	\$1,123,334	\$902,942	\$712,182	\$747,686	\$1,067,017
Year-End Net Surplus	(\$507)	(\$14,955)	\$15,058	(\$5,848)	(\$2,442)

Source: Bethesda Urban Partnership

b. Contract for Transportation Management District Services

BUP also holds a contract with the County to manage the Bethesda Transportation Management District. Commuter Services' staff in DOT's Director's Office administers this contract. Revenues from this

contract fund BUP's annual commuter surveys and its ride matching efforts to promote carpooling and vanpooling. In FY23, BUP received \$638,854 for transportation management under this contract, accounting for 12% of BUP's County revenue.

DOT's Commuter Services makes payments on this contract from the Mass Transit Fund. In FY23, County revenue sources accounted for in the Mass Transit Fund include property taxes, service charges, licensing fees, and parking and other fines.

c. Contracts for Street Sweeping and Trash Collection in Silver Spring and Wheaton

BUP holds two joint contracts with the County to provide services in the Wheaton and Silver Spring Urban Districts: one to collect trash from the public trash cans located in the urban districts and another to perform street sweeping. In FY23, revenue from these contracts was \$270,381 and together, they accounted for 5% of BUP's County revenue.

The funding for these contracts comes from the Wheaton and Silver Spring Urban District Funds. For the street sweeping contract, the urban districts pay BUP based on a fixed rate per linear curb mile of street cleaned. For the trash collection contract, the urban districts pay BUP based on a fixed amount per receptacle serviced.

In FY19 and FY20, the Silver Spring and Wheaton Urban Districts discontinued their trash collection contract with BUP and brought services in-house. Both contracts were re-instated with BUP in FY21 and remain in force in FY23.

d. Contract for Groundskeeping Services at Public Parking Lots and Garages

BUP holds a contract with the County DOT to provide groundskeeping services at public parking lots and garages in Bethesda. In FY23, this contract generated \$29,135 in revenue for BUP, accounting for less than 1% of BUP's County revenue. Payments for this contract come from the Bethesda Parking Lot District (PLD) Fund.

e. Special Appropriation – Winterization of Norfolk Avenue Streeteries

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. To slow the spread of the disease, Maryland Governor Larry Hogan issued several executive orders with actions that included limiting the number of people that could gather indoors and closing all bars and restaurants (excluding carryout and delivery service).

To help relieve the economic impact these restrictions had on local businesses, the state and County allowed food service establishments to provide outdoor eating areas. Some businesses and property owners in the County created "streeteries," large, contiguous areas of open space that benefit multiple nearby food service establishments. As the weather became colder and indoor restaurant restrictions

tightened, outdoor streeteries needed to provide heating and protection from the elements for food service establishments to maintain a level of business throughout the winter months.

In December 2020, the County Council approved a special appropriation to the County's FY21 Operating Budget of \$1,250,000 to provide winterization funding for streeteries in the County. The source of the funding was a federal grant to the County for COVID-19 relief. The County's Regional Services Centers implemented the funding in districts where a streetry was either using part of the County's right-of-way or partnering with the County to assemble the outdoor space.⁶⁰

BUP received \$175,000 in FY21 to add tents and heaters to the Norfolk Avenue Streetry. The BCC-RSC paid BUP in installments based on invoiced expenses.

2. Non-County Revenue

a. Event income and sponsorships

BUP earns revenue from events it manages, such as Taste of Bethesda, Imagination Bethesda, and the Bethesda Fine Arts Festival, through private sponsors. Some events also raise income from event participants. In FY19, FY20, and FY22, proceeds from these events accounted for an average of 76% of BUP's non-County revenues, but dipped to 52% in FY21. BUP reports this reduction in event and sponsorship income in FY21 is because the COVID-19 pandemic forced BUP to move all events online for an entire year. BUP staff describe receiving little interest from sponsors to fund events when they were not in-person. BUP's return to more in-person events is reflected in increases in event income and sponsorship revenue in both FY22 and FY23.

b. Bethesda Circulator advertising

Private businesses pay to have their logos or advertisements on the Circulator bus. As shown in Table 4-3 above, BUP uses this revenue to fund Circulator operating costs that exceed the amount of County funding for this service, and for capital and maintenance costs like maintaining and purchasing bus stop benches and signage.

As noted above, BUP lowered its advertising rates in FY20, FY21, and FY22 because buses were running on a limited schedule and ridership was down significantly during the pandemic. As a result, revenue from Circulator advertising fell by 40% between FY19 and FY22. BUP retained these lowered advertising rates in FY23.

⁶⁰ County Council Staff Report, *Special Appropriation to the Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budget, Montgomery County Government, Community Engagement Cluster, Support for COVID-19 Response - Winterization for Streeteries, \$1,250,000*, December 1, 2020.

c. Maintenance on state roads

BUP holds a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration to provide maintenance services on state roads in “gateway areas.” BUP and the State Highway Administration signed an extension to the MOU in February of 2018 and again in February 2023 for an additional five years.⁶¹

d. Miscellaneous

Miscellaneous revenue includes interest income and the contracts that BUP holds with other entities (e.g., Imagination Stage, Ourisman Honda in Bethesda) to provide private property maintenance services.

C. Special District Funds

This section describes the County special district funds that support BUP: the Bethesda Urban District Fund, the Bethesda Parking Lot District (PLD) Fund, and the Countywide Mass Transit Fund. The Urban District Fund and Bethesda PLD Fund provide most of the revenue that BUP receives.

1. Bethesda Urban District Fund

The County’s Bethesda Urban District Fund finances BUP’s agreement with the County to manage the Bethesda Urban District. Table 4-5 shows the revenues into and expenditures from the Urban District Fund for FY19 through FY23. Significantly, transfers from the Bethesda PLD are the largest source of revenue for the Bethesda Urban District Fund.

⁶¹ Amendment II to the Memorandum of Understanding by and between Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration and Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc., February 13, 2023.

Table 4-5: Bethesda Urban District Fund Revenues and Expenditures, FY19 – FY23 (\$000s)

	FY19 Actual	FY20 Actual	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Est.
Beginning Fund Balance	\$199	\$48	\$79	\$356	\$278
Revenues					
Urban District Tax	\$693	\$714	\$740	\$736	\$816
Charges for Services (OMD Maintenance)	\$134	\$184	\$242	\$234	\$184
Transfer from Bethesda Parking Lot District	\$1,532	\$1,620	\$1,610	\$2,409	\$2,352
Transfer from General Fund	\$800	\$810	\$750	0	0
Transfer to General Fund	\$-24	\$-22	\$-21	\$-22	\$-21
Total Revenue	\$3,336	\$3,354	\$3,401	\$3,713	\$3,610
CIP Current Revenue				\$-192	
Expenditures					
Urban District Services*	\$2,943	\$2,911	\$2,941	\$2,941	\$3,081
Miscellaneous Urban District Expenses**	\$345	\$367	\$238	\$277	\$293
Prior Year Adjustments/Reserves	0	0	\$-135	\$25	0
Total Expenditures	\$3,289	\$3,275	\$3,044	\$3,243	\$3,374
Year-End Fund Balance	\$48	\$79	\$356	\$278	\$236

Sources: BUP and OMB, Schedule A-4 of the Approved Operating Budgets, FY19, FY20, FY21, FY22, FY23, and FY24.

*Excludes Circulator expenses.

**OLO calculated this using the Urban District Appropriation/Expenditure from the Operating Budget and subtracting the amount of BUP's contract.

Revenue. The Bethesda Urban District Fund receives funding from the following sources:

- **Urban District Tax.** The County Code authorizes the Council to levy a tax on all assessable real and personal property in the urban district, at a rate not to exceed 30 cents per \$100 of assessable property.⁶² Since FY09, the tax rate in the Bethesda Urban District has been 1.2 cents per \$100 of assessed value for real property and 3 cents per \$100 of assessed value for personal property. From FY19 through FY23, revenues from this tax increased from \$693,270 to \$816,079.

⁶² County Code § 68A-4(a)(1).

- **Maintenance Charges Paid by Optional Method Developers (OMD).** The County Code authorizes the County Executive to charge optional method developers for the cost of maintaining off-site amenities for that development.⁶³ BUP assesses a fee for each service provided to an optional method developer and submits an invoice to the County, which then charges the developers. BUP receives payment for these services through its agreement with the County to manage the urban district.
- **Transfers from the Bethesda Parking Lot District (PLD).** County law allows the County Council to transfer revenue from PLD parking fees to the fund of any urban district in which the fees are collected. The amount of this transferred revenue must not exceed the number of parking spaces multiplied by the number of enforcement hours per year multiplied by 20 cents.⁶⁴ In FY22, the Council approved an increase of \$798,722 in the PLD transfer to the Bethesda Urban District and reduced the general fund transfer to \$0.⁶⁵ In FY23, approximately \$2.35 million was transferred from the Bethesda Parking Lot District to the Bethesda Urban District (Table 4-5, page 47).⁶⁶
- **General Fund Transfer.** Urban districts may receive a transfer from the general fund to support a level of service that the County would have otherwise provided to the area had the urban district not been established. In FY06, the Council eliminated the general fund transfer to the Bethesda Urban District and replaced it with funds transferred from the Bethesda PLD Fund. In FY16, following County Council and Executive actions to limit annual transfers from the Bethesda PLD Fund, the Council reinstated general fund support for the Bethesda Urban District.

In years when urban taxes and PLD revenues were strong, the transfer from the general fund did not always occur.⁶⁷ In FY19, FY20, and FY21, the Council approved transfers of \$800,318, \$810,318, and \$750,318 respectively from the County's General Fund to the Bethesda Urban District Fund. In FY22 and FY23, the Council zeroed out the transfer from the general fund.⁶⁸

Tax and Fee Requirement. County law limits the relative proportion of urban district revenue that can come from either the urban district tax or the parking fee transfer. Specifically, the law states that neither the urban district tax nor the parking fees transferred into an urban district may exceed 90% of their combined total.⁶⁹

Table 4-6 shows this requirement has been followed: from FY19-FY21, urban district tax revenue was 31% and parking fee transfers were 69% of the combined total. In FY22, the contribution of transfers from the PLD Fund to the combined total increased to 77% due to the Council's approved increase to the

⁶³ County Code § 68A-4(a)(3).

⁶⁴ County Code § 68A-4(a)(2) and § 60-16(c).

⁶⁵ County Council Economic Development Committee Staff Report, *FY24 Operating Budget: Urban Districts*, April 18, 2023.

⁶⁶ The Council approved a transfer of approximately \$2 million from the Bethesda PLD to the Bethesda Urban District in FY24.

⁶⁷ County Council Economic Development Committee Staff Report, *FY24 Operating Budget: Urban Districts*, April 18, 2023.

⁶⁸ The Council approved a General Fund transfer of \$432,923 in FY24, which was less than the County Executive's budget request. (OMB, Schedule A-4 of the Approved Operating Budgets, FY23 and FY24).

⁶⁹ County Code § 68A-4 (c).

total amount transferred from the PLD to the Bethesda Urban District. The proportion of parking fee revenues reduced slightly in FY23 to 74% of the combined total.

Table 4-6: Urban District Funding, Tax and Fee Requirement (\$000s)

	FY19 Actual	FY20 Actual	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Est.
Urban District Tax	\$693	\$714	\$740	\$736	\$816
Parking Fees Transfer	\$1,532	\$1,620	\$1,610	\$2,409	\$2,352
<i>Total Tax and Fee</i>	<i>\$2,225</i>	<i>\$2,334</i>	<i>\$2,350</i>	<i>\$3,145</i>	<i>\$3,168</i>
Tax as a % of Total	31%	31%	31%	23%	26%
Parking Fee as a % of Total	69%	69%	69%	77%	74%

Source: OMB. Schedule A-4 of the Approved Operating Budgets, FY19, FY20, FY21, FY22, and FY23, and Recommended Operating Budget, FY24.

Expenditures. As shown in Table 4-5 on page 47, Bethesda Urban District Funds are used to fund the County’s agreement with BUP to manage the urban district. In FY23, the Council appropriated approximately \$3.1 million (91% of district expenditures) for BUP’s service contract. The BCC-RSC uses the remaining funds for an urban district manager to oversee the agreement with BUP and other miscellaneous expenses for the urban district.

2. Bethesda Parking Lot District (PLD) Fund

The Bethesda Parking Lot District Fund is managed by DOT’s Division of Parking Management. The Bethesda PLD Fund supports the urban district agreement (through PLD transfers to the urban district fund) and the contract for groundskeeping at public lots and garages in Bethesda. The Bethesda PLD also funds the construction, operation, and maintenance of parking lots and garages in Bethesda. This section describes PLD revenue and expenditures.

Revenue. The Bethesda Parking Lot District has the following revenue sources:

- **Parking fees** collected in the Bethesda PLD from parking meters and parking permits. The Council sets parking fees by resolution as part of its approval of the annual operating budget.
- **Parking fines** for non-moving violations within the Bethesda PLD (e.g., parking at an expired meter or in a no parking zone). Parking fines are set in the same resolution that establishes parking fees.
- **Property taxes** levied on commercial and non-commercial property in the PLD.⁷⁰ The Council sets PLD property tax rates as part of the annual operating budget. The County zeroed out PLD

⁷⁰ The County Code provides for a property tax exemption or reduction for certain properties based on their compliance with parking regulations in the Zoning Ordinance. Properties must apply to DOT for an exemption. (Chapter 60 of the County Code)

property tax rates beginning in FY16 as part of a larger plan to strengthen the long-term fiscal health of the PLDs.

- **Miscellaneous Revenue** includes investment income or proceeds from the sale of land or a bond issue.

Expenditures. The County Code authorizes the use of PLD funds for activities related directly to parking, i.e., construction, operation, and maintenance of parking lots and garages in the district where the revenue is generated. It also authorizes the use of parking fees to fund urban district services and transportation management activities.⁷¹

The largest expenditures in the Bethesda PLD are for CIP projects and operating costs for parking lots and garages. Currently, Bethesda PLD revenue funds CIP projects such as ongoing renovations in existing garages. Operating costs include ongoing maintenance and security of public parking lots and garages.

The remaining PLD expenditures include a transfer to the Bethesda Urban District to fund BUP's agreement with the County to run the Bethesda Urban District and other miscellaneous expenses.

3. Mass Transit Fund

The Mass Transit Fund is a Countywide special tax district funded with County revenues from a property tax, Ride On fare revenue, bus advertising, and other fees. The Division of Commuter Services in DOT administers the Mass Transit Fund. BUP's contract to manage the Bethesda Transportation Management District is funded through the Mass Transit Fund. Since FY15, a transfer from the Mass Transit Fund to the Urban District Fund has also been used to pay for the Bethesda Circulator.

D. Related Issues

1. Bethesda Arts and Entertainment District

BUP manages Bethesda's Arts and Entertainment District. The direct costs of A&E District events are primarily funded by BUP's marketing budget, private contributions, and event income.

2. Living Wage

In 2002, the Council adopted the Living Wage Law, which requires certain contractors and their subcontractors to pay a certain level of wages – known as a “living wage” – to employees who perform work on County service contracts.⁷² By executive order, Montgomery County as an employer must also pay the living wage to its merit system employees.⁷³ The Chief Administrative Officer adjusts the wage

⁷¹ County Code § 60-16

⁷² County Code § 11B-33A

⁷³ Executive Order 91-03, effective date July 1, 2003

rate annually based on changes in the cost of living, as measured by the U.S. Department of Labor's Consumer Price Index.

County staff report the County Attorney has determined that BUP is not legally required to pay the living wage because the County has an agreement with BUP to manage the Bethesda Urban District instead of a contract. The County Attorney has not issued a formal opinion on the matter.

County staff reported that, in the summer of 2013, the County adjusted BUP's budget to pay BUP employees the FY14 living wage rate. According to BUP staff, roughly a half-dozen employees began receiving the living wage rate, with incremental upward pay adjustments for employees above their pay grade. The BCC-RSC now notifies BUP of living wage rate changes, and BUP's budget requests include an adjustment for those changes. Effective July 1, 2023, the required hourly wage rate is \$17.05.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/PRO/dbrc/wage-requirements-law.html>

Chapter 5. Feedback from County Government and Community Representatives

This chapter summarizes feedback on BUP's performance from government and community organizations who interact directly with BUP or benefit from the services BUP provides.

- **Section A** summarizes feedback from County Government and nongovernment entities obtained through OLO interviews; and
- **Section B** summarizes feedback on BUP's performance from focus groups organized by Progressive Urban Management Associates for BUP's 2024-2029 Strategic Plan.

Table 5-1: BUP's Relationship with Government and Community Organizations

Agency/Organization	Nature of the Relationship
Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Center	Administers agreement with BUP to manage the urban district and the Bethesda Circulator. Director is an ex officio member of BUP's Board of Directors.
Mid-County and Silver Spring Regional Services Centers	Administer contracts with BUP for trash removal and street sweeping in the Wheaton and Silver Spring Urban Districts.
Montgomery County Department of Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administers contracts with BUP to manage the Bethesda Transportation Management District and for grounds keeping services for County parking lots and garages in the PLD. • Solicits BUP's assistance in monitoring road issues in Bethesda. • Receives crosswalk condition assessments and monthly reports on streetlight outages from BUP and coordinates with BUP to manage street closures for events.
MCPD, District 2 Station	Coordinates with BUP to manage street closures and other event logistics and communicates and coordinates with BUP regarding safety issues.
MCFRS, 2nd Battalion	Coordinates with BUP on emergency preparedness and ongoing safety issues.
Montgomery County Planning Department	Coordinates with BUP on projects in Bethesda that have a public element and obtains input from BUP for the Downtown Bethesda Sector Plan.
Greater Bethesda Chamber of Commerce	Works with BUP to support businesses in downtown Bethesda and to address issues that impact businesses.
TMD Advisory Committee	Advises BUP and BTS on activities related to transportation management. Appointed by BUP's Board of Directors.
A&E District Board of Directors	Advises BUP on activities related to the Bethesda Arts and Entertainment District. Appointed by BUP's Board of Directors.
Jim and Carol Trawick Foundation	Sponsors the Bethesda Literary Festival; Carol Trawick also provides funding for the Trawick Prize and the Painting Awards.
Bethesda Cares	Coordinates with BUP regarding individuals experiencing homelessness.
Bethesda Green	Promotes sustainability initiatives in Bethesda, including providing recycling bins for public right-of-way that BUP currently empties.

A. Feedback from County Government and Community Organizations

OLO interviewed staff from the County and other organizations listed in Table 5-1 to elicit feedback on BUP's performance. Overall, interviewees shared positive comments about the professionalism of BUP's staff and the high quality of BUP's services. This section summarizes themes from their feedback.

Quality of Services. Interviewees reported that BUP delivers very high-quality services and expressed satisfaction with BUP's work. County staff who administer BUP's contracts reported that BUP consistently meets and often exceeds its contract requirements. Many interviewees highlighted BUP's high level of expertise in issues relating to downtown Bethesda, and several suggested that BUP can serve as a model of best practices for urban district management. All interviewees considered their interactions with BUP staff to be positive. Many interviewees emphasized the role of BUP's senior management in ensuring efficiency and effectiveness.

Coordination with County Government. All County partners reported they have a positive working relationship with BUP and most reported that BUP communicates and collaborates with their departments effectively. One reported that BUP serves as a liaison between the government and the public, functioning in many ways as the "eyes and ears on the ground."

Public safety representatives reported they work closely with BUP management and staff to address safety and security issues. They noted BUP staff have a deep base of "institutional knowledge" that allows them to anticipate needs and provide services, often without being asked. County staff value BUP's ability to proactively organize security for community events while also involving the appropriate MCPD officers.

County staff also highlighted BUP's willingness to "go above and beyond" what is required in its County contracts to address issues in the community. For example, one County partner noted that even though BUP's contract to manage the Bethesda Urban District does not require rodent control, BUP spent \$38,000 of its own funds to address the increasing rodent issues within the urban district.

Several interviewees expressed appreciation for BUP's leadership in spearheading, maintaining, and expanding the Bethesda Streeterly. After partnering with County DOT to launch the concept during the pandemic, interviewees note that BUP absorbed the additional costs of emptying the streeterly's trash cans and maintaining its roadside barriers. BUP also sourced its own funds to hire a consultant to design a more permanent streeterly concept.

BUP's Responsibilities. When asked whether BUP should do more than it already does, most interviewees indicated that they believe BUP's current responsibilities are appropriate, and most felt BUP did not need to improve its services. Some stakeholders identified an opportunity for BUP to implement best practices around sustainable landscaping, including planting more native species. Several interviewees noted they expect BUP's workload will increase as more residents, workers and visitors arrive in the downtown area, requiring more staff and funding resources.

B. Feedback from Focus Groups and Survey

As part of its strategic planning process, BUP hired Progressive Urban Management Associates (P.U.M.A.) to conduct focus groups to solicit perceptions about BUP's performance. In February and March 2023, the consultant conducted five focus groups with stakeholders from the community, including County partners, developers, downtown residents, local business owners, and visitors. The consultant convened three additional focus groups with the BUP Board of Directors, the Arts & Entertainment District Board of Directors, and the Bethesda Transportation Solutions Advisory Committee. P.U.M.A. also held a brainstorming session with BUP staff and conducted an online survey.⁷⁵

Feedback from the focus groups and survey indicated that stakeholders are pleased with BUP and view the organization as an asset for the community. BUP received favorable ratings for all its programs and services and stakeholders felt BUP was important for the continued success of downtown Bethesda. When asked to provide areas for improvement, stakeholders identified the following for BUP to focus on:⁷⁶

- Create more public spaces including green spaces, parks, a dog park, and outdoor gathering spaces such as a civic plaza;
- Develop strategies to protect and promote small businesses so that unique and local businesses thrive in downtown Bethesda;
- Create more evening and nightlife entertainment options, including live music, theaters, community hubs, and nighttime-oriented businesses like breweries, etc.;
- Enhance connections between downtown's two distinct activity centers, Woodmont Triangle and Bethesda Row;
- Deter crime, via a larger police/security presence and other tactics such as security cameras;
- Improve the Bethesda Metro Station experience; and
- Establish a community vision and cohesive plan for downtown Bethesda's future.

⁷⁵ Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc., *Five Year Strategic Plan 2024-2029*, July 2023, pg. 4.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pg. 8.

Chapter 6. Findings

Chapter 68A of the County Code authorizes the County to establish urban district corporations to provide services within the County’s urban districts. By law, an urban district corporation exists for five years and can be extended for an unlimited number of additional five-year terms by a resolution adopted by the County Council and approved by the County Executive. Before the Council renews the corporation’s term, the law requires the Office of Legislative Oversight to conduct a performance evaluation.

The Council established BUP in 1993 as the urban district corporation for the Bethesda Urban District. Since BUP’s establishment, the Council has reauthorized BUP five times, most recently in January 2019. BUP’s current five-year term ends on January 31, 2024.

This chapter presents findings from OLO’s evaluation of BUP:

- **Section A** provides OLO’s findings related to BUP’s responsibilities; and
- **Section B** presents OLO’s findings related to BUP’s finances.

A. Responsibilities

Finding #1: The Bethesda Urban Partnership’s overall service requirements in their annual agreement with the County have not changed since the Council reauthorized BUP in 2019.

The statutes, governing documents, and contracts listed in the table below define BUP’s responsibilities. Since January 2019, there have been no major changes or additions to the law or BUP’s governing documents.

Statutes, Other Governing Documents, and Contracts that Define BUP’s Responsibilities

Statutes

- Code of Maryland, Commercial District Management Authorities
- Montgomery County Code Chapter 68A, Urban Districts
- County Code Chapter 42A, Ridesharing and Transportation Management

Governing Documents

- Resolution 14-56, Establishment of a Transportation Management District in Bethesda
- 1994 Bethesda Central Business District Sector Plan
- Bethesda Urban Partnership Articles of Incorporation

County Government Contracts

- Agreement to manage the Bethesda Urban District, including the Bethesda Circulator
- Contract to manage the Bethesda Transportation Management District
- Contracts for Street Sweeping and Trash Collection in the Wheaton and Silver Spring Urban Districts
- Contract for Groundskeeping at Public Parking Lots and Garages in Bethesda

The County Government's contracts with BUP generally stayed in force throughout BUP's sixth term. The one exception is the contract to provide trash collection services in the Silver Spring and Wheaton Urban Districts. In FY19 and FY20, the County discontinued its contract with BUP to provide trash collection services in both urban districts but then reinstated the contract in FY21. The joint contract remains in force in FY23.

BUP's major areas of responsibility continue to be to:

- Maintain and enhance streetscape amenities;
- Program public interest activities, including promotion, organization, and support of cultural, recreational, and business activities;
- Advance the business and residential environment and sense of community;
- Enhance safety and security in public areas;
- Provide specialized transportation services; and
- Increase the number of people using alternative modes of transportation.

Finding #2: The Bethesda Urban Partnership's services continue to fulfill the organization's responsibilities.

BUP provides services in six key area to achieve the organization's purposes defined in the law, governing documents, and County agreements/contracts. The table on the next page provides examples of BUP's services in each of these areas. Of note, during its sixth, five-year term, BUP:

- Maintained the frequency of its maintenance and landscaping services while adding maintenance services for six new optional method development properties;
- Added groundskeeping services for one new parking lot and four new parking garages;
- Provided daily trash collection for 221 public trash cans in the Silver Spring Urban District, weekend trash collection for 62 public trash cans in the Wheaton Urban District, and swept and cleaned streets three times a week in each district;
- Underwent its first brand redesign since 1994; and
- Worked with employers, employees, and residents to promote alternate modes of transportation. The non-auto driver mode share (NADS) increased to 50% in 2019 from 37% in 2017, and 2022 data show a NADMS of 52% for employees and 64% for residents.

Additionally, OLO found that BUP's services often exceed its agreement/contract requirements. For example, BUP empties trash cans in the Bethesda Urban District seven days per week instead of three days per week as specified in its agreement with the County. It empties trash cans in heavy-traffic areas multiple times a day as needed and sweeps streets three nights per week although the agreement does not specify frequency. BUP also provides grounds maintenance at no cost for a green space owned by NIH that is an important gateway to downtown Bethesda, and frequently works with the County and broader community to address additional maintenance concerns in the urban district such as streetlight repair and rodent control.

Responsibility	Examples
Maintaining and enhancing streetscape amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance and landscaping (including trash/recycling collection, tree maintenance, snow removal, and street sweeping) of Bethesda public rights-of-way, public parking structures, and highway medians. • Maintenance of pedestrian tunnel next to the Bethesda Metro Station. • Trash collection and street sweeping in Wheaton and Silver Spring .
Programming public interest activities, including promotion, organization, and support of cultural, recreational, and business activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of website, conducting media outreach and publishing written advertising materials. • Organization of special promotional events such as Taste of Bethesda, Bethesda Summer Concerts, and Winter Wonderland. • Promotion and management of cultural activities and events such as Triangle Arts Studios and the Bethesda Film Fest.
Advancing the business and residential environment and sense of community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing of assistance to Bethesda visitors through the Ask Me Team. • Supporting local restaurants by creating and maintaining the Bethesda Streeteries. • Communicating with appropriate agencies about emergency maintenance, safety, or cleanliness issues.
Enhancing safety and security in public areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with County Police and Fire/Rescue Service to improve safety and security.
Providing specialized transportation services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of the free downtown Bethesda Circulator.
Increasing the number of people using alternative modes of transportation for commuting to Bethesda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance with the development of traffic mitigation plans for employers. • Marketing of alternative transportation options such as public transit, carpools, and rideshare services to employers, employees, and residents in downtown Bethesda. • Completion of an annual survey of employees and residents to monitor changes in transportation use.

Finding #3: BUP experienced reductions in services, programs, and funding during the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing it to reduce or reimagine many of its activities between FY19 and FY22.

The public health restrictions put in place during COVID-19 led to fewer people using BUP’s services and participating in its events. These reductions also led to decreases in BUP’s revenues both from County contracts and from event income. As shown in the next table, BUP adapted its operations by reimagining many – and cutting some – of its activities between FY19 and FY22.

Activity	Change in Operations
Ambassador Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask Me Team members stopped tracking their interactions with the public starting in September 2020. • BUP reassigned team members to other duties. • Data collection resumed in 2022.

Activity	Change in Operations
Bethesda Circulator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2020, BUP suspended Circulator service for two months at the onset of COVID-19. • The County reduced Circulator funding from FY20 to FY22 due to low ridership. As a result, BUP removed one bus from its route and placed the remaining two on a limited schedule. • BUP lowered Circulator advertising rates because buses were on a limited schedule and ridership was down; advertising revenue fell by 40% between FY19 and FY22.
Special Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BUP either canceled or moved many of its annual events to virtual platforms in 2020 and 2021. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Taste of Bethesda</i> – canceled in 2020, 2021, and 2022 (due to Hurricane Ian). ○ <i>Local Writer's Showcase</i> – held online in 2020 and 2021 and returned to in-person in 2022 and 2023. ○ <i>Bethesda Fine Arts Festival</i> – canceled in 2020 and moved to a Facebook gallery; not planned in 2021 and returned in 2022 and 2023. • Income from events and sponsorships dropped from 76% of BUP's non-County revenues in FY20 to 52% in FY21.
Bethesda Transportation Solutions Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2020 Walk & Ride Challenge encouraged teleworkers to incorporate walking into their day and record their steps. • Bike to Work Day was canceled in 2020 and in 2021; BTS hosted a smaller event in the Norfolk Avenue Streeterly in front of a local bike shop.

Finding #4: BUP took on additional responsibilities and expanded some services during COVID-19 to respond to emerging community needs.

During the height of COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021, BUP adapted its online presence to keep Bethesda residents, employers, and visitors connected and up-to-date on public health information. BUP used its social media platforms to quickly and frequently share important updates on County health restrictions, new virtual events, and local business promotions. BUP also introduced new initiatives, described in the next table, to safely engage the community while helping support local businesses.

New Initiative	Description
The Bethesda Streeterly	BUP partnered with DOT to open two streeterly locations in June 2020 to create more outdoor seating for people to gather safely and patronize restaurants during COVID 19. The initiative became very popular with restaurants, residents, and visitors. BUP has now made the Norfolk Avenue Streeterly permanent and has plans for expansion.
Savor Bethesda Restaurant Week	BUP started <i>Savor Bethesda</i> in October 2020 with special dine in and take out deals to encourage patrons to support local restaurants during the pandemic. The initiative will continue annually.
Bethesda Bucks	<i>Bethesda Bucks</i> is an e-gift card that can be used in participating downtown restaurants and retailers.

Finding #5: County and community representatives provided positive assessments of BUP's services and staff.

OLO interviewed County representatives and other individuals who work with BUP. All interviewees shared positive comments about the professionalism of BUP's staff and the high quality of BUP's services. Most interviewees reported that BUP communicates and collaborates with its partners effectively. Many cited BUP's high level of expertise in urban district management and several emphasized the role of BUP's senior management in ensuring efficiency and effectiveness.

OLO also reviewed focus group and survey feedback on BUP's performance, compiled by Progressive Urban Management Associates during BUP's strategic planning process. The feedback indicated that participants, which included County partners, property developers, residents, visitors, and employers in downtown Bethesda, had high regard for BUP and its role in Bethesda. Stakeholders gave BUP's programs and services favorable ratings and viewed the organization as an asset for the community.

B. Finances

Finding #6: In FY23, BUP's expenditures were \$5.2 million.

In FY23, BUP's expenditures were \$5.2 million, reflecting an increase of 3% from FY19 as shown in the table below. Expenditures declined in FY20, FY21, and FY22, largely due to reduced Circulator service and fewer in-person events during the pandemic. For each year, BUP's largest expenditure category was field operations.

Bethesda Urban Partnership Expenditures, FY19 – FY23 (Actuals, \$000s)

Budget Category	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
Field Operations and Bethesda Circulator	\$2,816	\$2,402	\$2,320	\$2,409	\$2,886
Internal Operations	\$589	\$701	\$711	\$761	\$815
Marketing and Special Events	\$805	\$823	\$684	\$685	\$722
Transportation Management	\$568	\$579	\$587	\$552	\$539
Arts and Entertainment District	\$171	\$102	\$64	\$140	\$158
Reserve for Capital Equip., Special Projects, Operations	\$99	\$47	\$19	\$26	\$60
Total Expenditures	\$5,048	\$4,653	\$4,384	\$4,808	\$5,180

Source: Bethesda Urban Partnership

Finding #7: In FY23, the County provided 94% of BUP's revenue via five contracts. BUP's agreement to manage the Bethesda Urban District provided the majority of funding from the County.

In FY23, BUP received 94% of its revenues from the County via five contracts and/or agreements to provide specific services in Bethesda and other urban districts. Six percent of its revenues came from non-County sources including event income and sponsorships, Bethesda Circulator advertising, and contracts with non-County entities to provide maintenance services.

Bethesda Urban Partnership Revenue by Type, FY19 – FY23 (Actuals, \$000s)

BUP Revenue	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23
County Revenue	\$5,091	\$4,503	\$4,681	\$4,617	\$5,066
Non-County Revenue	\$476	\$337	\$195	\$253	\$321
Total Revenue	\$5,567	\$4,840	\$4,876	\$4,870	\$5,387
County % of Total	91%	93%	96%	95%	94%

BUP's agreement with the County to manage the Bethesda Urban District (including the Bethesda Circulator) provided \$4.1 million in revenues in FY23, which represents the majority (81%) of BUP's revenues from the County.

Summary of BUP's Contracts and/or Agreements with the County

County Contract/Agreement	Funded by	Services covered	Admin.	% of County Revenue
Bethesda Urban District Services	Bethesda Urban District Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BUP's field operations Ask Me Team activities Marketing and special events activities 	BCC-RSC	81%
Bethesda Circulator	Mass Transit Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circulator contractor expenses Marketing 		
Transportation Management District Services	Mass Transit Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BUP's annual commuter surveys Ride matching efforts 	DOT	12%
Street Sweeping and Trash Collection in Silver Spring & Wheaton	Silver Spring & Wheaton Urban District Funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each linear curb mile of street cleaned Each trash receptacle serviced 	Silver Spring & Mid-County RSCs	5%
Groundskeeping Services at Public Parking Lots and Garages	Bethesda Parking Lot District (PLD) Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BUP's maintenance and landscaping activities at lots and garages 	DOT	1%

Finding #8: Bethesda Parking Lot District funds represent the primary source of revenue for the Bethesda Urban District.

The Bethesda Urban District provides the funding for BUP's agreement to manage the Bethesda Urban District. The Urban District receives funding from transfers from the Bethesda Parking Lot District, an urban district tax, and maintenance charges paid by optional method developers.

Funds transferred from the Bethesda PLD are the largest source of revenue for the Bethesda Urban District Fund. In FY23, revenues for the Bethesda Urban District included a \$2.4 million transfer from the Bethesda Parking Lot District, representing 65% of total revenue.

Urban districts may receive a transfer from the general fund to support a level of service that the County would have otherwise provided to the area without the urban district. In FY19, FY20, and FY21, the Council approved transfers from the County's General Fund to the Bethesda Urban District Fund, but the Council zeroed out the transfer from the general fund in FY22 and FY23.

Bethesda Urban District Revenues, FY19 – FY23 (\$000s)

Revenue Source	FY19 Actual	FY20 Actual	FY21 Actual	FY22 Actual	FY23 Est.
Urban District Tax	\$693	\$714	\$740	\$736	\$816
OMD Maintenance Charges	\$134	\$184	\$242	\$234	\$184
Transfer from Bethesda Parking Lot District	\$1,532	\$1,620	\$1,610	\$2,409	\$2,352
Transfer from General Fund	\$800	\$810	\$750	0	0
Transfer to General Fund	\$-24	\$-22	\$-21	\$-22	\$-21
Total Revenue	\$3,336	\$3,354	\$3,401	\$3,713	\$3,610

Sources: BUP and OMB. Schedule A-4 of the Approved Operating Budgets, FY19, FY20, FY21, FY22, and FY23, and Recommended Operating Budget, FY24.

Chapter 7. Recommendations

This chapter presents the Office of Legislative Oversight's recommendations for Council action and discussion related to the Bethesda Urban Partnership. OLO recommends that the Council:

- Reauthorize the Bethesda Urban Partnership for another five-year term.
- Require BUP to develop a new strategic plan before its next authorization.

Recommendation #1: Reauthorize the Bethesda Urban Partnership for another five-year term and retain the requirement for an OLO evaluation prior to reauthorizing.

OLO recommends that the Council adopt a resolution to reauthorize the Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc. for another five-year term. OLO's review confirmed that BUP's activities continue to fulfill the purposes of the organization as described by state and County law, the 1994 Bethesda Central Business District's Sector Plan, the 2006 Woodmont Triangle Amendment, the 2017 Bethesda Downtown Plan, and BUP's own Articles of Incorporation.

OLO found that BUP's partners in the County and Bethesda community are pleased with the quality of BUP's work. Representatives from the County expressed satisfaction with the services that BUP provides, reporting they are of very high quality and that BUP communicates and collaborates with its partners effectively. In addition, community stakeholders appreciated BUP's knowledge and expertise in managing the urban district and indicated that BUP serves as a valuable liaison between the County and Bethesda community.

Recommendation #2: Require BUP to develop a new five-year strategic plan before the next reauthorization.

OLO recommends that the Council require BUP to develop a new five-year strategic plan before its next reauthorization. BUP should continue to seek input from its constituents, including County departments, developers, business owners, employers, residents, and visitors to Bethesda at the beginning of the strategic planning process through surveys or facilitated group discussions.

OLO also suggests that BUP continue to include a status report on implementing objectives identified in the previous strategic plan. This action would assist the Council in evaluating BUP's performance in the years since and understanding how the new plan differs from the previous one.

Chapter 8. Agency Comments

The Office of Legislative Oversight circulated a draft of this report to the Chief Administrative Officer for Montgomery County and to the Board of Directors of the Bethesda Urban Partnership. OLO greatly appreciates the time taken by the County and BUP representatives to review the draft report and provide comments. OLO's final report incorporates technical corrections provided by County and BUP staff.

The written comments received from the CAO and BUP Board of Directors are included in their entirety, beginning on the following page.



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE



Marc Elrich
County Executive

Richard S. Madaleno
Chief Administrative Officer

MEMORANDUM

August 18, 2023

TO: Chris Cihlar, Director, Office of Legislative Oversight

FROM:  Richard S. Madaleno, Chief Administrative Office 

SUBJECT: DRAFT Report 2023-11
2023 Evaluation of the Bethesda Urban Partnership

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Draft OLO Report No. 2023-11, regarding the evaluation of the Bethesda Urban Partnership (BUP). Your comprehensive review of Bethesda Urban Partnership confirms our long-held opinion of the BUP as a high-performing, forward-thinking organization. I am pleased to read Executive Branch staff and the community continue to hold BUP in high regard. BUP is a critical partner in providing services in the Bethesda Urban District, a key economic engine for Montgomery County.

In response to the report's recommendations, I offer the following comments:

OLO Recommendation #1:

Reauthorize Bethesda Urban Partnership for another five-year term and retain the requirement for an OLO evaluation prior to reauthorizing.

CAO Response to OLO Recommendation #1:

We concur with OLO's recommendation. We feel the five-year timeframe provides an important opportunity for the Executive Branch and County Council to reacquaint ourselves with the issues important to the continued success of the Bethesda Urban District.

OLO Recommendation #2:

Require BUP to develop a new five-year strategic plan before the next reauthorization.

CAO Response to OLO Recommendation #2:

We concur with the recommendation. The strategic plan, updated regularly, is a critical exercise not

DRAFT Report 2023-11
2023 Evaluation of the Bethesda Urban Partnership
August 18, 2023
Page 2 of 2

only for BUP but for the County as we seek to enhance the economy and livability of our urban centers. The current five-year plan was completed in July of 2023.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this draft report and look forward to participating in the Council's review. If you have any questions or need additional information please contact Peter Fosselman, Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Office Director, at 301-524-0645 or peter.fosselman@montgomerycountymd.gov.

cc: Fariba Kassiri, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer
Peter Fosselman, Director, Bethesda-Chevy Chase Regional Services Office



7700 Old Georgetown Road
Bethesda, Maryland 20814

301-215-6660
BETHESDA.ORG

September 6, 2023

Chitra Kalyandurg
Office of Legislative Oversight
Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Ms. Kalyandurg,

The Board of Directors of the Bethesda Urban Partnership (BUP) has reviewed the draft of the OLO Report for 2023. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the technical aspects of the report and your acceptance of these comments. The findings in the report reflect what the Board considers the strength of our organization, a deep commitment to providing the highest quality services to the downtown Bethesda community.

Our enhanced mission is to, "Create an environment, experience, and economy in which downtown Bethesda businesses, residents, and visitors can thrive and prosper." The next five years will be an exciting time for Bethesda as we anticipate new development with thousands of new residents, new businesses moving to Bethesda and continued partnerships with many important community organizations. Downtown Bethesda is a vibrant and vital downtown, and we look forward to maintaining Bethesda's success.

We believe BUP is well-positioned to work with our County and community stakeholders towards a successful future for Bethesda that ensures that Bethesda continues to be a wonderful place to raise a family, open a business, and enjoy a diverse offering of restaurants, shops and cultural amenities.

The BUP Board would like to thank the Office of Legislative Oversight for their efforts in producing this, the OLO's sixth recommendation for reauthorization. We greatly value your time and effort in reviewing our Strategic Plan, talking to key constituents, and thoroughly reviewing our efforts in downtown Bethesda. It is the goal of our Board and staff to continue to provide the highest quality maintenance, marketing and mobility services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marian Block", written over a light blue circular background.

Marian Block
Chair,
Bethesda Urban Partnership, Board of Directors

A world in one neighborhood.



Appendices

2023 Evaluation of the Bethesda Urban Partnership - List of Appendices

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MEMORANDUM

February 8, 1995

TO: Virginia Baxter, Acting Director
Office of Procurement

VIA: Marc P. Hansen, Acting County Attorney *MPH*

FROM: Richard H. Melnick, Assistant County Attorney *RHM*

RE: Bethesda Urban Partnership- Status as a "Public Entity" for Procurement Purposes

This memorandum is to follow-up on a request from John Polletto, of the Division of Parking, regarding whether the Bethesda Urban District ("BUD") is a "public entity" for purposes of the Montgomery County Procurement Regulations. After reviewing the circumstances surrounding this case, we conclude that the BUD is a "public entity" as envisioned by the Regulations.

Factual Background

The Division of Parking is interested in entering into a contract with the BUD, wherein the latter would perform landscape and maintain grass and tree areas in County owned parking lots located in the BUD. The County's Department of Transportation ("DOT") currently has a similar contract for the BUD to provide streetscaping of medians and streetsweeping inside of curbs, on roadways which the County otherwise maintains.

Issue

The question arises whether the proposed contract may be entered as a non-competitive "public entity procurement", thereby eliminating the need for public solicitation.

Analysis

The BUD is established pursuant to Chapter 68A of the Montgomery County Code, which delineates the purposes and functions of urban districts in the County. The BUP is a non-stock corporation created by the County Council, and is subject to the County Code. Montg. Co. Code, Sections 68A-9; -12. Urban districts were created by the County Council to address the concern that certain areas of the County are becoming "intensely developed communities containing diversified commercial, institutional, and residential development." Montg. Co. Code, Section 68A-2(a). As a result, the Council created the BUD as a special taxing district to provide an administrative and financial framework for this area to: increase the maintenance of the streetscape and its amenities; provide additional public amenities such as plantings, seating, shelters, and works of art; promote the commercial and residential interests of the area; and, program cultural and community activities. Montg. Co. Code, Sections 68A-2, -3(a), -8.

Urban districts are created to provide public services and facilities that primarily benefit property and persons within the urban district. Montg. Co. Code, Section 68A-3(e). By definition, an urban district corporation "is a public instrumentality"...which "performs tasks of benefit to the government." Montg. Co. Code, Section 68A-9(a). In addition to enhancement, maintenance and provision of the streetscape and its amenities, the BUD may provide other initiatives to advance the business and residential communities. Montg. Co. Code, Section 68A-9(b).

The limited extent to which the Code permits urban districts to compete with the private sector includes entering into contracts for maintaining streetscape amenities on public or private property. Montg. Co. Code, Sections 68A-11(b)(7); -11(c). Perhaps most importantly, the BUP is expressly not subject to the requirements of the County Procurement Regulations (except to make a good faith effort to comply with MFD requirements). Montg. Co. Code, Section 68A-11(d). The BUP is also considered a "local government" as that phrase is used in the Local Government Tort Claims Act. Montg. Co. Code, Section 68A-11(e).

The BUD fits within the Procurement Regulations' definition of "public entity", which includes:

(1) the federal, state and local governments or their agencies; (2) boards, commissions, or committees established by a federal, state, or local law; (3) government organizations or associations of the federal government, state governments, or political subdivisions of state governments; or (4) any other entity that both qualifies as a not-for-profit corporation under the provisions of the United States Internal Revenue Code and which is incorporated by one of the preceding entities for the exclusive purpose of supporting or benefiting a public entity.

Montg. Co. Proc Regs., Section 2.4.81.

Since the BUP is a "public entity", the contract for the services described above requires neither public solicitation nor justification as a non-competitive procurement. Montg. Co. Proc. Regs. 4.1.12.1; 4.1.14.1. DOT has stated this contract is in the best interests of the County, both from a cost effectiveness and resources standpoint, and allows the BUD to provide services permitted by the Code at parking facilities located within that urban district. Montg. Co. Code, Section 11B-41.

Conclusion

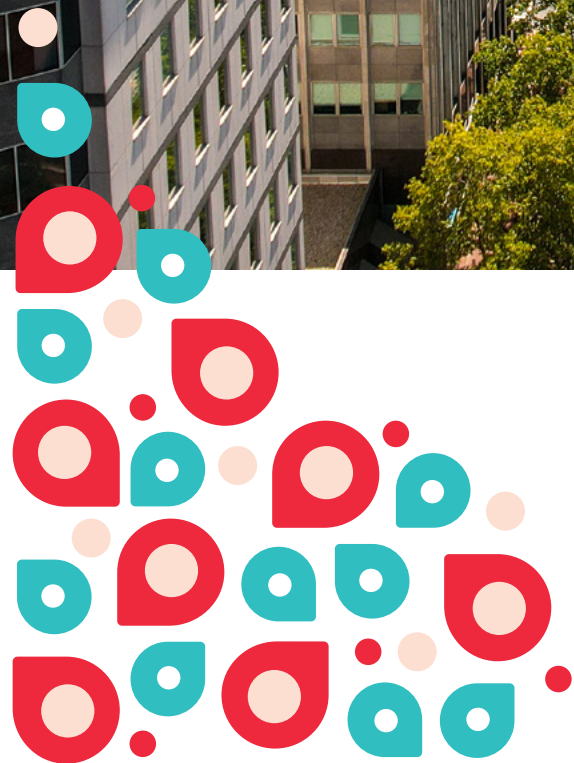
The DOT Division of Parking may contract with the BUD in a non-competitive procurement for the above-described landscaping services in parking facilities located in the BUD.



**Saturday
10am–11pm**



Learn about the Bethesda Urban Partnership, Bethesda Circulator, Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District and Bethesda Transportation Solutions. Visit www.bethesda.org or call 301-215-6660.

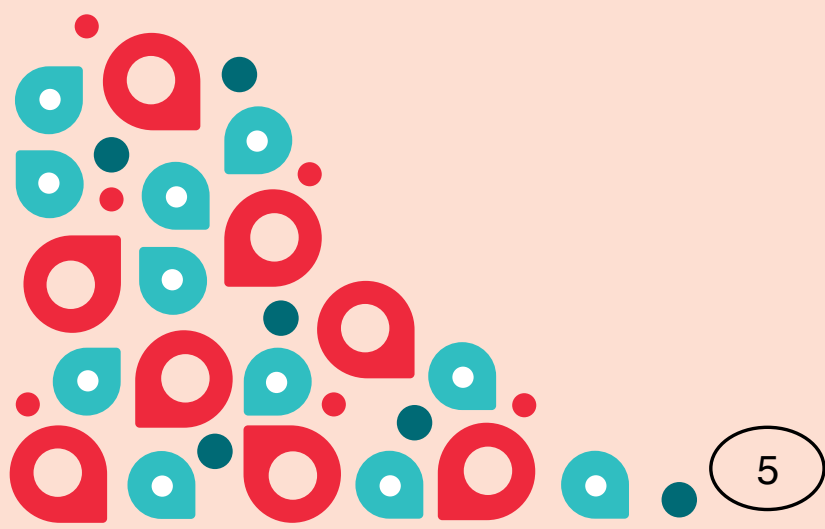


Bethesda 
URBAN PARTNERSHIP

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN
2024-2029

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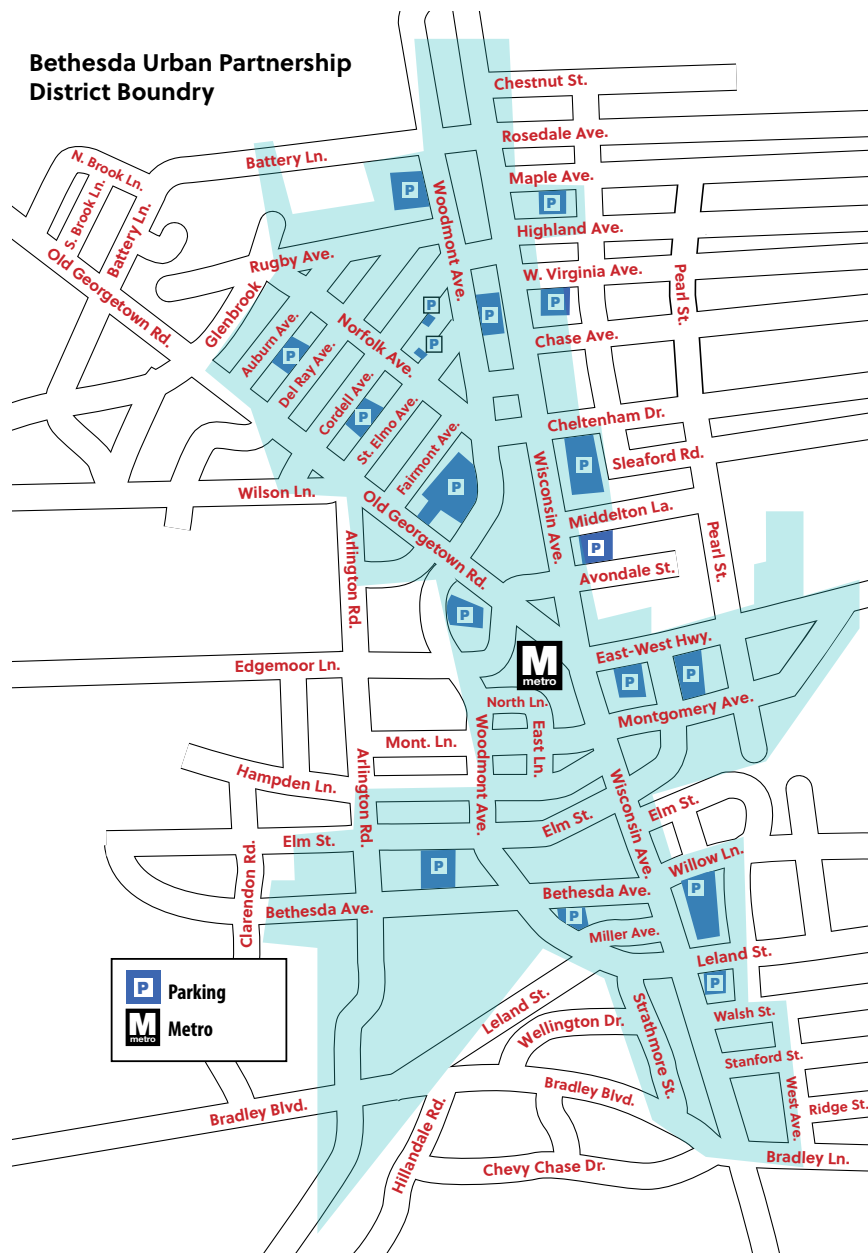


BACKGROUND

The **Bethesda Urban Partnership ("BUP")** is a not-for-profit downtown management organization, established by Montgomery County in 1994 to market and maintain downtown Bethesda. Throughout the last 29 years, BUP's 35 employees who work in marketing, maintenance and field operations, transportation management, and administration have continued to promote and support a beautiful and vibrant downtown.

The **Maintenance team's** responsibilities include landscaping, trash removal, street sweeping, sidewalk repairs, and the general beautification of downtown Bethesda. The Ask Me Team provides information to downtown visitors and offers other general assistance during nights and weekends. BUP's **Marketing team** plans, implements, and manages special events and Bethesda Arts & Entertainment District initiatives. This includes managing an annual calendar of programming, promoting downtown's restaurants, retailers, and arts organizations, and operating downtown Bethesda's website and social media. The state-designated Arts & Entertainment District produces arts and cultural programming, as well as manages art spaces throughout downtown including Gallery B, Studio B, and the Triangle Art Studios. The **Mobility team** – Bethesda Transportation Solutions (BTS) – works with businesses and individuals to promote alternative modes of transportation for commuting into downtown Bethesda. BUP also manages the Bethesda Circulator, a free bus service that makes a frequent 3.1-mile loop through downtown six days a week.

BUP is operated by an 11-member Board of Directors comprised of residents, businesses, and developers appointed by the County Executive and County Council. The organization is funded primarily by revenue generated from Bethesda Parking Lot District fees, in addition to the commercial Urban District property tax. (The Urban District, as shown in the map to the right, is a 387-acre area encompassing downtown Bethesda). Private sponsors also partner with BUP to support signature events.



STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVES

BUP develops a new strategic plan every five years to guide the organization forward and adjust to new challenges, opportunities, and priorities. The last strategic plan was completed in 2019. Since then, downtown Bethesda (and cities and downtowns in general) has experienced tremendous change.

There has been significant development within downtown Bethesda in the last five years including high rise apartment and condominium buildings. Additionally, Marriott International recently completed its new corporate headquarters. This new complex includes 700,000 sq. ft. of office space, in addition to a 200-room, Marriott hotel. Additionally, under the new Downtown Bethesda Plan developed by Montgomery County's Planning Department, 4,100,000 sq. ft. of new density has been approved for specific developments, and another 2,200,000 sq. ft. of density may also be approved under the Plan in the future.

Furthermore, downtowns across the world have transformed in the last three years, and are rethinking the way visitors, residents, and employees interact with urban districts in a post-COVID pandemic era. For these reasons, timing was right for a holistic strategic planning process to evaluate the role of BUP moving forward. The strategic plan is intended to set the direction and priorities of BUP for the next five years. It does so by laying out clear vision and mission statements, and a new framework of goals and strategies for the organization to realize this vision for downtown Bethesda. While the Bethesda Urban Partnership is well-positioned to manage downtown Bethesda, there are some areas in the plan where BUP does not have the ability to make changes, but will work closely with county and state partners in areas such as affordability, public safety, economic development and construction.

To assist in the strategic planning process, BUP contracted with Progressive Urban Management Associates (P.U.M.A.), a Denver-based real estate economics and planning firm specializing in strategic planning for downtown partnerships across the country.

PLANNING PROCESS

The plan was informed by broad community input. This included capturing feedback from more than 1,000 stakeholders about the needs and opportunities in downtown Bethesda. Five separate focus groups were held with different constituent groups (see list to the right). A brainstorming session was also held with BUP staff. Three additional focus group sessions were held with each of the three boards/advisory committees that make up BUP, including the BUP Board of Directors, the Arts & Entertainment (A&E) District Board of Directors, and Bethesda Transportation Solutions Advisory Committee. A community-wide online survey was also distributed through BUP communications channels, capturing input from a wide range of Downtown property and business owners, residents, employees, and regular visitors to downtown. The various focus groups and brainstorming sessions took place during two P.U.M.A. site visits in February and March 2023. In total, the strategic planning process lasted six months and the plan was completed in July 2023.

FOCUS GROUPS INCLUDED:

- County Partners
- Developers
- Downtown Residents
- Local Business Owners
- Visitors
- BUP Board of Directors
- A&E Board of Directors
- BTS Advisory Committee
- BUP Staff

DOWNTOWN SNAPSHOT

Density Assessment

Office	8,603,942 sq. ft.
Retail	1,701,874 sq. ft.
Residential	10,280 units
Hotels	7 hotels; 1,605 rooms

Sources: Maryland State Department of Assessment & Taxation, May 2023 (for office, retail, residential); CoStar, retrieved May 2023 (for hotels)

Population by Age

Under 5	3%
5 – 14	5%
15 – 24	9%
25 – 34	26%
35 – 44	19%
45 – 54	11%
55 – 64	10%
65 – 74	10%
75 and up	7%

Source: Esri, 2022 estimates

Future Development

There are 16 developments either approved (11) or pending approval (5) in downtown Bethesda. All of these developments include residential units in the project, 10 include retail, two office, and one hospitality.

- 3,740 New Residential Units
- 160,000 sq. ft. of New Retail
- 688,000 sq. ft. of New Office
- 233,000 sq. ft. of New Hotel Space



Stakeholder Engagement Summary

Stakeholder engagement was the core element of the strategic planning process. Throughout the process, varied Bethesda stakeholders were asked for input, capturing a wide range of perspectives on downtown's present and future. Engagement took place primarily in-person in varied formats, including focus groups, one-on-one interviews, and via a community-wide online survey. The following summarizes key themes from stakeholder engagement.

FOCUS GROUP THEMES

Focus groups were held with different downtown constituent groups, partners, board leadership, and staff. Each group was taken through similar exercises, focused on identifying downtown Bethesda's current strengths, challenges, and future opportunities.

Downtown's Strengths and Challenges

Strengths	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A balanced, mixed-use neighborhood • A walkable, pedestrian-friendly environment • Clean and well-maintained • Landscaping, flowers, and other beautification efforts • Generally safe • International cuisine and dining hub for Montgomery County • Old town/small town feel • Strong mix of retail • Lots of events and activities for the community • Strong residential base and continued growth in housing sector • Employment centers and HQs in and adjacent to downtown – NIH, Suburban Hospital, Naval Support Activity Bethesda, Marriott HQ • Diversity of two distinct activity hubs (Woodmont Triangle and Bethesda Row) – each with their own vibe and clientele • Location within the region/proximity to Washington, D.C. • Booming • Wealth in surrounding area • Good school choices • Metro access • The Streeteries • Capital Crescent Trail • Bethesda Circulator • Public parking garages • Minimal impact of homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasingly unaffordable – for housing, businesses, and customers • Growing pressures on local independent businesses • Loss of character, uniqueness, authenticity, and quaintness of the neighborhood • Rate of change makes it harder to maintain sense of community and place • Congestion/traffic • Construction disruptions • More regional competition now – has diluted Bethesda's hold on the market – other urban districts and destinations that are dining and shopping destinations (Pike and Rose, DC neighborhoods, Crown, etc.) • Harder to draw younger demographics • Lack of evening activity and nightlife • Metro experience • Not enough public space, greenspace • Lack of dog park • Lack of connection between downtown's two main districts • Wisconsin Ave. – a barrier between east and west; congestion; pedestrian safety • Parking – perception and frustration with cost, rather than supply issue • Bike lanes – add to congestion • Loss of daytime office workers • Crime increasing • Lack of diversity • Pedestrian safety

Top Priority Improvements by Focus Group

Focus group participants were taken through a prioritization exercise. Ideas for improvements were brainstormed, then each participant was given three votes to help identify which should be top priorities over the next five years.

Focus Group	Priority Improvements (in order)
County Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on operational aspects of an increasingly urban area • More joint development opportunities to leverage community benefits and create more usable public space • Curbside management
Developers/Commercial Real Estate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger police presence • More nightlife and entertainment • Reform permitting to make it easier for small businesses to open • Enforceable hours of loading/unloading
Residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More cultural and entertainment venues, things to do in the evenings • Create a vision – town concept • Protect/promote places for small, unique businesses
Retail Business Owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce crime – police/security presence, cameras, strengthen enforcement • More events • Better utilize public spaces
Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill storefronts/vacancies • More greenspace, parks, and dog park • More crime enforcement • Fill retail gaps – i.e., places to hang out, bookstore
BUP Board of Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New residential development and more affordability • Promote and improve safety of alternative modes of transportation • More green space • Better connection between two major downtown Bethesda areas (Woodmont Triangle and Bethesda Row) • Attract primary jobs/another major HQ
A&E Board of Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purple Line pedestrian tunnel • More affordable housing • More nightlife activities • Black box/community theater, or similar
BTS Advisory Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce traffic/congestion on Wisconsin Avenue • Widen Capital Crescent Trail • Widen the Trolley Trail • Mitigate crime – security cameras
BUP Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beautify the Metro • Dog park • Civic plaza/central gathering space • Community space/cultural hub



Priority Improvement Themes

The following are common themes that arose across the various focus group discussions and voting exercises:

- Create more public spaces – green spaces, parks, a dog park, and outdoor gathering spaces such as a civic plaza
- Find ways to protect and promote small businesses, ensuring that unique and local businesses have the chance to thrive in downtown Bethesda
- Create more evening and nightlife entertainment options and activities, including live music, theaters, community hubs, and nighttime-oriented businesses like breweries, etc.
- Better connect downtown's two distinct activity centers, Woodmont Triangle and Bethesda Row
- Deter crime, via a larger police/security presence and other tactics such as security cameras
- Improve the Bethesda Metro Station experience
- Establish a community vision and cohesive plan for what downtown Bethesda's future should be

ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

The online survey ran during March and April 2023, and collected 1,020 responses. The survey was open to anyone interested and was distributed through various BUP communication channels. Participants represented a cross-section of downtown Bethesda stakeholders. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of respondents live in Bethesda outside of downtown, 38% regularly visit downtown, and 26% were downtown residents. 10% worked downtown and 3% owned or managed a business or commercial property downtown.

Downtown Bethesda Today

The most common words used to describe downtown Bethesda today were **restaurant, expensive, walkable, construction, and clean**. Overall, respondents have positive impressions of downtown Bethesda but view it as lacking diverse destinations (especially in terms of price), evening/nighttime activity, and attractive public gathering spaces.

When asked to rate various downtown conditions, all those listed scored favorably. **Cleanliness, transit access, and restaurants/dining** received the highest ratings. **Public spaces, housing options, and tourism** received mostly "Fair" scores.

Respondents are very pleased with BUP's **Maintenance services**: this service received 86% "good" or "very good" responses. **The Norfolk Avenue Streetery** is also much-loved, receiving the second highest number of "good" and "very good" responses (75%). **Cultural events, festivals, and programming** also scored well, while the **Bethesda Circulator** and the **Ask Me Team** received many "Don't Know" responses, but were rated very highly by those who were familiar with the services.

Downtown Bethesda Tomorrow

The most common words used to describe respondents' vision for downtown Bethesda in the year 2030 were **safe, walkable, diverse, affordable, vibrant, and green**.

When asked to choose a single project that will be most important for the future of downtown Bethesda, two projects tied for greatest importance: **Create more green spaces** and **Broaden housing options**. Close behind in third place was **Make downtown more pedestrian-friendly and bikeable**.

When asked to choose the single most important service or program from a list of nine options, nearly a third of respondents chose **Promote and encourage more local businesses**. This aligns with many open-ended comments from the following question calling for non-chain retailers and restaurants at mixed price points. **Improving public safety** was selected by just under a quarter of respondents. (It should be noted that the current state of public safety was rated favorably in a prior “Downtown Bethesda Today” question. The results from this question can be interpreted as respondents desiring it to stay that way). **More events and activity downtown** or **promoting inclusivity and diversity** emerged as most important for an additional third of respondents.

Respondents were also given the chance to provide additional ideas for improvements to downtown Bethesda in an open-ended format. Ideas and common themes amongst responses (roughly ordered by frequency) included:

- Bookstore
- Evening/late night activation
- Bring back the Woodmont Ave. Streetery
- Pedestrian safety improvements
- Dog park
- Unique, non-chain businesses
- More affordable stores/restaurants
- Prevent business displacement, help control commercial rents
- Widen sidewalks
- Destinations for teens
- Increased tree canopy

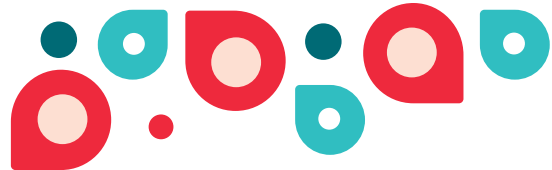


Respondents were asked to share their interest in attending several downtown events. **Taste of Bethesda** was selected most often (69%), followed by **Bethesda Restaurant Week** (61%), the **Summer Concert Series** (55%), and **Bethesda Fine Arts Festival** (55%).

When asked which programming efforts the Partnership should focus on to grow downtown Bethesda as an arts and entertainment district, respondents expressed a resounding preference for **evening/nighttime entertainment options**. Also important were a mix of **larger, keystone events**, **smaller events**, and **ongoing activation in public spaces**.



The word cloud to the left represents the words respondents used to describe their vision of downtown Bethesda in the future. The size of the word indicates how frequently it was used, with the largest words being the ones used most often.



ENGAGEMENT RECAP



Downtown Bethesda is extremely well-positioned for the future:

The neighborhood's fundamentals are strong. It is widely considered clean, safe, attractive, and walkable. Downtown is a balanced, mixed-use neighborhood with a strong residential base, both in downtown and in neighborhoods immediately adjacent. Bethesda is well-located within the Greater Washington, D.C. area and has good access to the region via the Metro, trails, and streets. The street-level economy is vibrant with a critical mass of dining and retail uses throughout the district, primarily concentrated in downtown's two major activity centers – Woodmont Triangle and Bethesda Row, each of which has its own character and appeal distinct from the other.

This is at a time when many other downtowns nationally have struggled through the Covid-19 pandemic and recovery, and are burdened by high-dependency on office, sluggish return-to-work rates, lack of street vibrancy, public safety concerns, and growing unhoused populations. While return-to-office is slow, downtown Bethesda is in a fortunate position where it's not having to deal with the immense challenges facing many other downtown districts.



Rapid economic growth creates challenges: Downtown Bethesda continues to grow into a denser urban district, with new development underway throughout downtown. While economic development and vitality are good things, the rate of growth does present challenges. Construction's impact is felt throughout the neighborhood, impacting storefront businesses, residents, and commuters traveling by foot and car. Rapid growth is also increasing displacement pressures on local businesses. This was a chief concern amongst stakeholders – the #1 most important service or program amongst a choice of nine in the online survey was, "promote and encourage more local businesses." Local and one-of-a-kind storefront businesses have long made Bethesda a unique draw, especially when it comes to restaurants, where the district has been seen as a dining destination for the greater region. To that end, stakeholders are concerned that, with the growth and rate of change (and with increasing regional competition), it is becoming more challenging to maintain Bethesda's unique sense of place, or more simply, its "special sauce."



Affordability: Along with rapid growth and development, often comes an increase in prices. Stakeholders expressed a concern about Bethesda fast becoming an unaffordable neighborhood. In the survey, "broaden housing choices" was the second most-popular choice when it came to downtown's future (behind only "create more green spaces" – more on this below). "Diverse" and "affordable" were two of the four most commonly-cited words when survey respondents were

asked to describe their vision for downtown Bethesda in the year 2030. Affordability doesn't just impact the housing sector and residential base either. Real estate value increases put added pressure on local independent businesses – and increasing rents lead to a retail mix that itself becomes less affordable and one-dimensional. Altogether, this impacts not just who can afford to live in downtown Bethesda, but who is attracted to shop, dine, and play in the neighborhood.

An emphasis on the public realm and outdoor activations: This theme was heard throughout stakeholder engagement. While there's a feeling that downtown's public realm is attractive, it doesn't have enough outdoor gathering spaces, parks, and greenspaces. In the online survey, when asked to choose the most important physical improvement for the future of downtown Bethesda, the top choice was "create more green spaces." More events and activity downtown, wider sidewalks, increased tree canopy, and a (formal) dog park were often mentioned as well. Lastly, the Streeteries – a pandemic-era experiment – have been hugely popular and, while there are some individuals who do not support the change, the Streeteries generated a strong sense of community that is widely celebrated and appreciated by residents and visitor alike.

Community-building: Maybe it's the lingering impact of the pandemic, or the rapid rate of growth and change in Bethesda, but stakeholders emphasized the importance of community-building elements when it comes to downtown's future. Evening and nighttime activities and entertainment options were a widely-cited missing piece in downtown Bethesda. Specific examples mentioned include live music, theaters, community centers or hubs, and community-oriented businesses such as bookstores, breweries, and the like. Outdoor gathering places, such as the Norfolk Avenue Streetry or a future central plaza or dog park, are a piece of this too. To sum up, as one focus group participant simply put it, downtown needs "more places to hang out."

BUP as an asset for the community: Stakeholders are widely pleased with BUP's services and programs, and view the organization as important to the continued success of downtown. In the online survey, all BUP services and programs were rated favorably, from maintenance to marketing. Just like the neighborhood itself, BUP is well-positioned to serve downtown in the future by continuing to provide enhanced services in the district. It can also place further emphasis on addressing some of the growing challenges arising in Bethesda and the priority improvements from the community, noted above. The following new, strategic plan framework, goals, and strategies aim to build on BUP's current strengths while growing its role in new areas of focus.





Vision, Mission & Values

A new vision statement, a refreshed mission statement, and reaffirmed core values are provided below. These updates align with themes that arose in stakeholder engagement and sync with BUP's new goals and strategies framework, detailed in the following pages.

VISION:

Downtown Bethesda is a vibrant hub of community activity for residents, workers, and visitors alike – a mixed-use district that is clean, safe, beautiful, walkable, and increasingly diverse.

MISSION:

Create an environment, experience, and economy in which downtown Bethesda businesses, residents, and visitors can thrive and prosper.

BUP ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES:

Service – BUP strives to provide exemplary service to all of our constituents.

Stewardship – BUP takes pride in caring for the environment and resources entrusted to us.

Spark – BUP continually works to improve its services, programming, and initiatives while also prioritizing new and creative ideas.



Strategic Plan Framework

The graphic below illustrates the new strategic plan framework for BUP. Overarching is the **vision** for downtown Bethesda, and BUP's organizational **mission** and **values**.

To support the mission and achieve the vision are nine new goals, organized into three **categories** – environment, experience, and economy – illustrating the fundamental areas of work for the organization:

- **Environment:** Foster a clean, safe, and green environment
- **Experience:** Ensure a welcoming experience that is unique and memorable
- **Economy:** Support continued economic vitality throughout downtown

Within each category, there are three goals, capturing where BUP should focus its energy, efforts, and resources over the next five years. Each goal has a set of **strategies** that drill into more specifics and will help BUP be successful in that given area. Goals and strategies have a longer-term time horizon and are intended to be a constant throughout the five-year term of the strategic plan. Specific **tactics and actions** are not included in this five-year plan, and instead should be developed internally by staff as a part of BUP's annual work planning and budget process. Tactics and actions are adaptable and fluid and more short-term in nature, and therefore are best developed in real-time by staff.

Importantly, the new goals framework also aligns with BUP's **organizational core values** – service, stewardship, and spark – with one goal within each category aligning with a different value, as the chart on the following page illustrates. Therefore, the new Five-Year Strategic Plan is both consistent with – but also brings added clarity to – BUP's core values, through which everything that the organization is striving for should flow. While BUP will focus on achieving all of these goals, it is important to note that some objectives fall outside of BUP's purview, and our role will be as a facilitator and communicator with County and State governments to meet the goals of the Plan.





Organizational Goals & Strategies

BUP's new goals and strategies are detailed below and on the following pages.



Environment

Foster a clean, safe, and green environment

Cleaning & Maintenance – *stewardship*

- Continue to manage a clean and well-maintained public realm
- Remain vigilant with sustainability efforts in public realm maintenance and beautification
- Ensure sidewalk infrastructure and public realm furnishings are hazard free and in top condition

Public Safety – *service*

- Work with Montgomery County Police Department to implement public safety measures in downtown, including but not limited to, evaluating the feasibility of bolstering downtown's officer presence
- Evaluate strategies to fortify security camera network, and other technologies to enhance safety in downtown

Beautification – *spark*

- Enhance downtown Bethesda's landscaping with free-standing planters and flowers and ground cover in tree wells and other public areas as applicable
- Multiply Downtown's tree canopy, with developer support, with new trees and help existing trees to grow and flourish



Experience

Ensure a welcoming experience that is unique and memorable

Programming & Events – *stewardship*

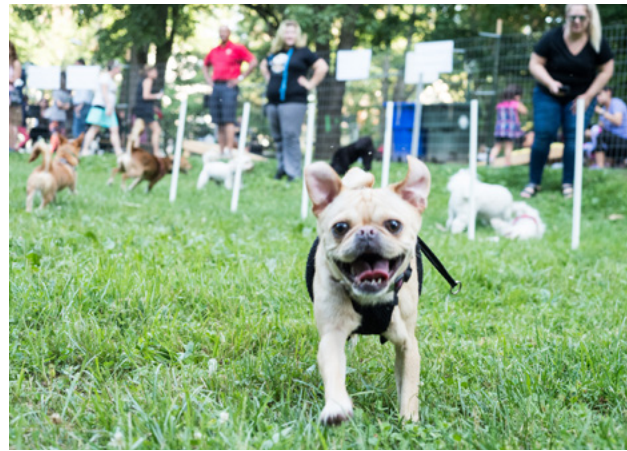
- Continue to provide and enhance a diverse calendar of year-round events
- Activate downtown's public spaces to encourage small-scale, ongoing use and promote these activations to community members
- Explore ways to create evening and nighttime entertainment options tailored to local residents and visitors

Mobility & Access – *service*

- Continue operation of the Circulator and implement tactics to increase ridership
- Collaborate with partners to improve the Metro Station experience
- Enhance pedestrian safety along Wisconsin Avenue
- Establish clear connections between Bethesda's two main restaurant and retail areas – Bethesda Row and Woodmont Triangle
- Identify and promote links to surrounding neighborhoods and the Greater Washington, D.C. region
- Support Montgomery County's curbside management efforts as needed, to mitigate challenges with loading and unloading

The Arts – *spark*

- Integrate more murals and public art installations throughout Downtown – that are diverse and varied, and help create a unique sense of place
- Continue to incubate the arts by offering affordable and attractive spaces for artists to both produce and display their artwork
- Collaborate with property owners and the arts community to fill vacant storefronts and office lobbies with temporary or permanent arts installations or pop-up activations



Economy

Support continued economic vitality throughout downtown

Marketing & Communications – *stewardship*

- Be intentional in celebrating BUP successes and elevate the public's knowledge of BUP and its programs
- Provide more communications about BUP initiatives and programs
- More actively promote downtown's businesses
- Increase connection and expand communication with residents in and adjacent to downtown



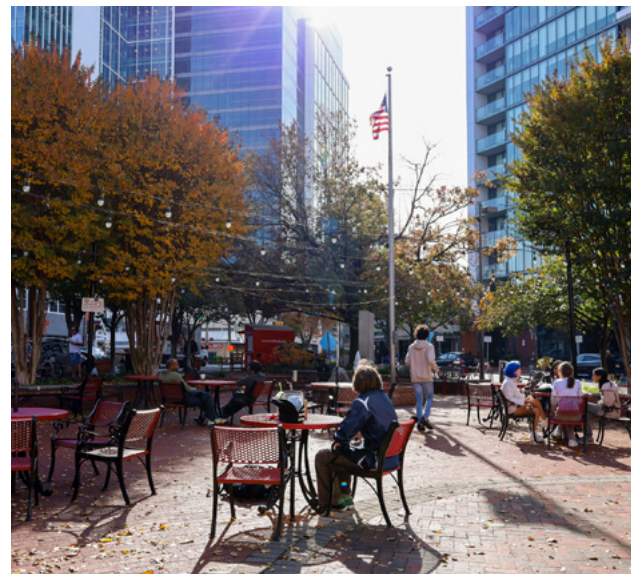
Small Business Support – *service*

- Promote, encourage, and find ways to increase and support local businesses
- Create more evening and nightlife entertainment options and activities
- Advocate and support efforts to fill downtown's missing business types that are strongly desired by the community (e.g., a bookstore)



Community-Building – *spark*

- Further establish the Norfolk Avenue Streeterly as a permanent and activated hub for the community
- Utilize current parks and Norfolk Avenue Streeterly for more activations; create new public gathering spaces as needed
- Advance efforts to create a downtown community hub/center
- Evaluate permanent solutions to establish a Bethesda dog park
- Encourage broader housing options to meet the needs of varying demographics and income levels





CONCLUDING STATEMENT

After profound change – locally and globally – over the last five years, timing was right for a new BUP strategic plan. Downtown Bethesda is flourishing and is well-positioned for the future as a dynamic urban, mixed-use district.

The work of BUP – providing a range of enhanced services and programs for downtown – remains critical. This strategic plan sets the stage for BUP to build on its strengths and also work more intently towards addressing the challenges and taking advantage of the opportunities of today and tomorrow in downtown Bethesda.



BETHESDA URBAN PARTNERSHIP STRATEGIC PLAN

ONLINE SURVEY SUMMARY

This online survey was developed to help identify priorities and improvements for the Bethesda Urban Partnership (BUP) over the next five years in order to inform its new 2023 Strategic Plan. The survey ran during March and April 2023, and collected 1,020 responses. The following analysis presents a summary of key findings, followed by a more detailed question-by-question summary of results and cross-tabulation analysis.

Respondent Characteristics and Demographics: The survey was open to anyone interested and was distributed through various BUP communication channels. Participants represented a cross-section of downtown Bethesda stakeholders. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of respondents live in Bethesda outside of downtown, 38% regularly visit downtown, and 26% were downtown residents. Only 10% worked downtown and 3% owned or managed a business or commercial property downtown. Respondents were reasonably well-distributed by age and income, and less so by ethnicity/race and gender.

KEY FINDINGS

Downtown Bethesda Today

- The most common words used to describe downtown Bethesda today were **restaurant, expensive, walkable, construction, and clean**. Overall, respondents have positive impressions of downtown Bethesda but view it as lacking diverse destinations (especially in terms of price), evening/nighttime activity, and attractive public gathering spaces.
- When asked to rate various services and programs in downtown Bethesda, all those listed scored favorably. **Cleanliness, transit access, and restaurants/dining** received the highest ratings. **Public spaces, housing options, and tourism** received mostly “Fair” scores.
- Respondents are very pleased with BUP’s **Maintenance services**: this service received 86% “Good” or “Very Good” responses. **The Bethesda Streetery** is also much-loved, receiving the second highest number of “Good” and “Very Good” responses (75%). **The Bethesda Circulator** and the **Ask Me Team** received many “Don’t Know” responses, but was rated very highly by those who were familiar with the services. **Marketing and promotions** received slightly lower scores as well as higher numbers of “Don’t Know” responses, indicating an opportunity to further broaden BUP’s communications reach.

Downtown Bethesda Tomorrow

- The most common words used to describe respondents’ vision for downtown Bethesda in the year 2030 were **safe, walkable, diverse, affordable, vibrant, and green**.
- When asked to rate the importance of nine projects for the future of downtown Bethesda, **Create more green spaces, Improve sidewalks and streetscapes, and Make downtown more pedestrian-friendly, bikeable and transit accessible** emerged with the highest ratings of “Important” or “Very Important.” Ranking slightly less important were **Metro station improvements, new housing opportunities, and improved parking experience**.

- When asked to choose the single most important project from the same list as above, there was no clear emphasis on any one project. Two projects tied for greatest importance: **Create more green spaces** and **Broaden housing options**. Housing is notable for dramatically rising in importance compared to its lower ranking in the previous question. Close behind in third place was **Make downtown more pedestrian-friendly and bikeable**. **Enhance the Metro station** and **Improve the parking experience** were selected least often.
- When asked to rate the importance of nine services or programs for the future of downtown Bethesda, **Promote and encourage more local businesses** emerged as the most highly valued option with 53% rating it as “Very Important.” **Public safety, cleanliness/maintenance**, and **events/activation of downtown** all received majority “Very Important” or “Important” ratings, as did **Make downtown more inclusive** and **Increase services for people experiencing homelessness**.
- When asked to choose the single most important service or program from the same list as above, nearly a third of respondents chose **Promote and encourage more local businesses**. This aligns with many open-ended comments from the following question (Q9) calling for non-chain retailers and restaurants at mixed price points. **Improving public safety** was selected by just under a quarter of respondents. (It should be noted that the current state of public safety was rated favorably in Question 1. The results from Question 8 can be interpreted as respondents desiring it to stay that way). **More events and activity downtown** or **promoting inclusivity and diversity** emerged as most important for an additional third of respondents.
- Respondents were also given the chance to provide additional ideas for improvements to downtown Bethesda in an open-ended format. Ideas and common themes amongst responses (roughly ordered by frequency) included:
 - Bookstore
 - Evening/late night activation
 - Bring back the Woodmont Ave. Streetery
 - Pedestrian safety improvements
 - Dog park
 - Unique, non-chain businesses
 - More affordable stores/restaurants
 - Prevent business displacement, help control commercial rents
 - Widen sidewalks
 - Destinations for teens
 - Increased tree canopy
- Respondents were asked to share their interest in attending several downtown events. **Taste of Bethesda** was selected most often (69%), followed by **Bethesda Restaurant Week** (61%), the **Summer Concert Series** (55%), and **Bethesda Fine Arts Festival** (55%). Roughly a third of respondents expressed interest in **Bethesda Outdoor Movies** and **Art/Gallery Events**. The **Bernard/Ebb Songwriting Awards Concert** received the least amount of interest.
- When asked which programming efforts the Partnership should focus on to grow downtown Bethesda as an arts and entertainment district, respondents expressed a resounding preference for **evening/nighttime entertainment options**. Also important were a mix of **larger, keystone events**, **smaller events**, and **ongoing activation in public spaces**. Respondents were overall least interested in formal arts-related programming.

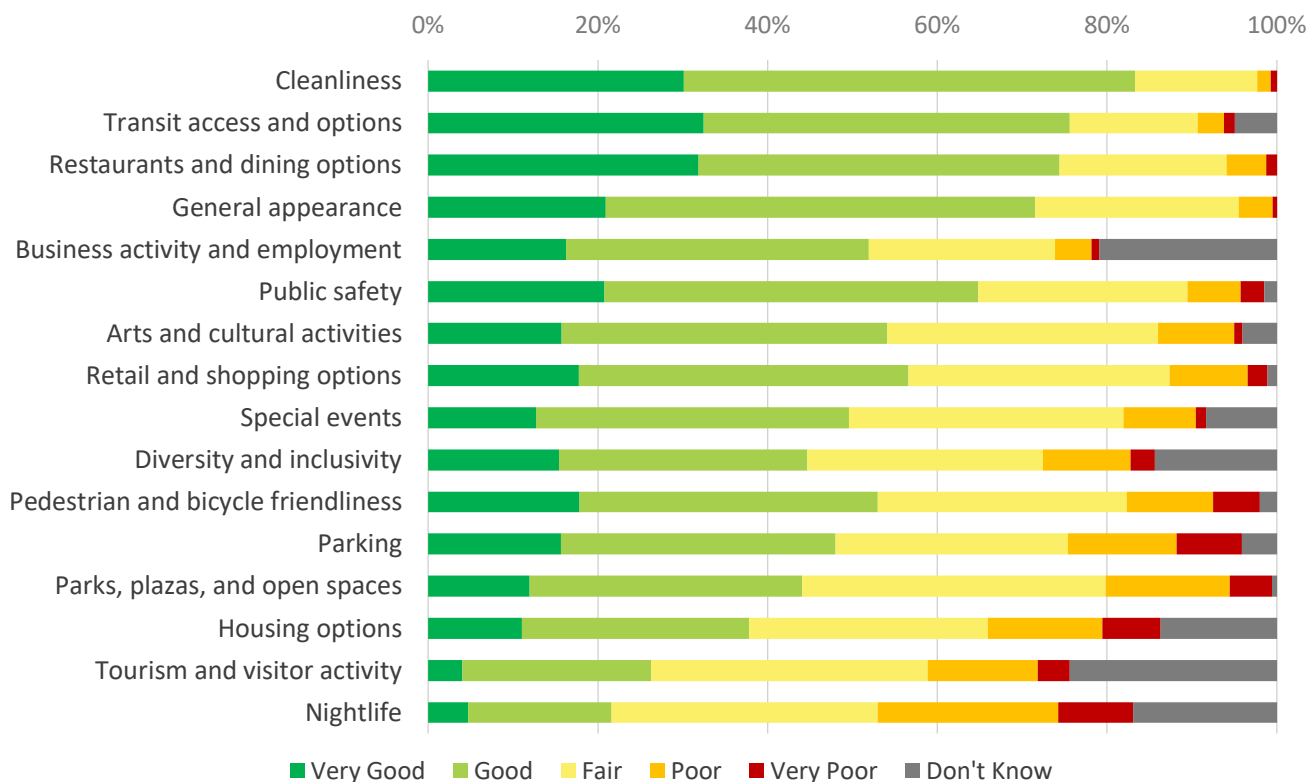
DOWNTOWN BETHESDA TODAY

Q1: On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the following conditions of downtown Bethesda?

Respondents were asked to rate different downtown conditions on a 1-to-5 scale, with 5 being the highest (i.e., "Very Good"). All but one condition received majority positive ratings ("Fair," "Good," or "Very Good"). The weighted average of each condition is shown in the adjacent table while the chart illustrates the distribution of responses.

Cleanliness, transit access, and restaurants/dining received the highest ratings. **Public spaces, housing options, and tourism** received mostly "Fair" scores. **Nightlife** received majority "Fair" scores, but also had the highest number of negative ratings ("Poor" or "Very Poor"). **Business activity/employment** and **tourism** exhibited a high number of "Don't Know" responses.

Condition	Weighted Average
Cleanliness	4.1
Transit access and options	4.1
Restaurants and dining options	4.0
General appearance	3.9
Business activity and employment	3.8
Public safety	3.8
Arts and cultural activities	3.6
Retail and shopping options	3.6
Special events	3.6
Pedestrian and bicycle friendliness	3.5
Diversity and inclusivity	3.5
Parking	3.4
Parks, plazas, and open spaces	3.3
Housing options	3.3
Tourism and visitor activity	3.1
Nightlife	2.9

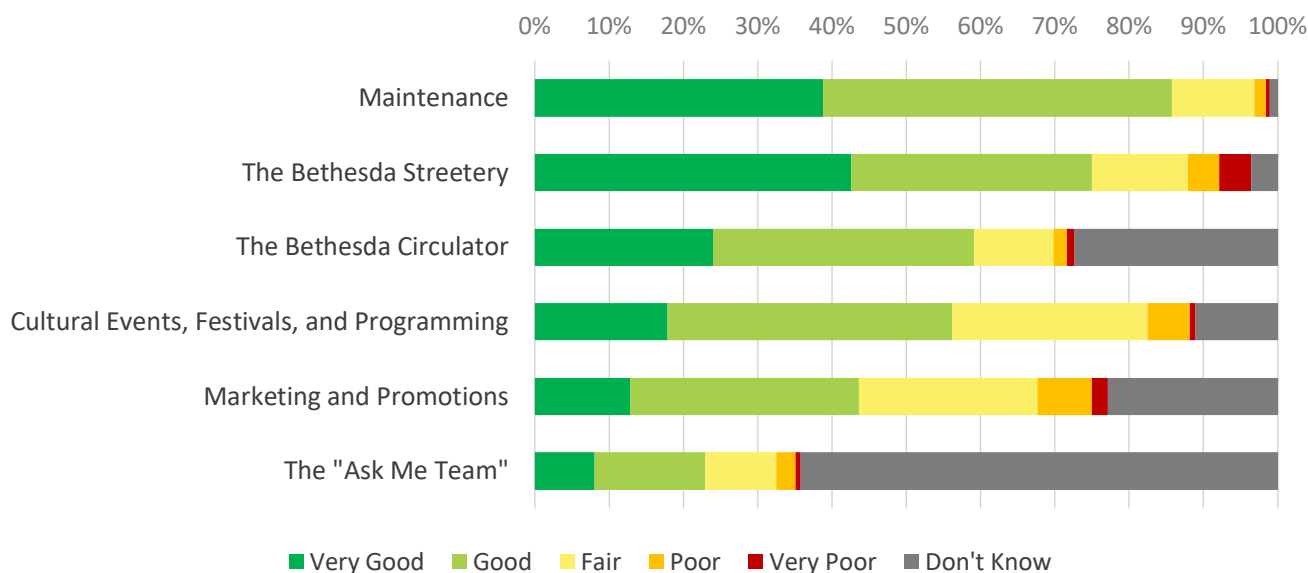


Q2: On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the following Bethesda Urban Partnership services and programs provided in downtown Bethesda?

Respondents were asked to rate different BUP services and programs on a 1-to-5 scale, with 5 being the highest (i.e., "Very Good"). Generally, all received positive ratings. The weighted average of each service or program is shown in the list below, while the chart illustrates the distribution of responses.

Service/Program	Weighted Average
Maintenance	4.2
The Bethesda Circulator	4.1
The Bethesda Streeterly	4.1
The Ask Me Team	3.8
Cultural events, festivals, and programming	3.8
Marketing and promotions	3.6

Respondents are clearly very pleased with BUP's **Maintenance services**: this service received 86% "Good" or "Very Good" responses. **The Bethesda Streeterly** is also much-loved, receiving the second highest number of "Good" and "Very Good" responses (75%). **The Bethesda Circulator** received high numbers of "Don't Know" responses, but nearly 60% of those who were familiar with the Circulator rated it "Good" or "Very Good". A similar trend was found for the **Ask Me Team**: two-thirds respondents (64%) were not aware of this program, but those who were rated it positively. **Marketing and promotions** received slightly lower scores, as well as higher numbers of "Don't Know" responses.



Q3: When you think of downtown Bethesda area today, what three words first come to mind?

The word cloud below represents the words respondents used to describe downtown Bethesda today. The size of the word indicates how frequently it was used, with the largest words being the ones used most often. The top responses, in order, were **restaurant**, **expensive**, **walkable**, **construction**, and **clean**.



DOWNTOWN BETHESDA TOMORROW

Q4: Looking to the future, please offer three words that best capture your vision for downtown Bethesda by the year 2030.

The word cloud below represents the words respondents used to describe their vision of downtown Bethesda in the future. The size of the word indicates how frequently it was used, with the largest words being the ones used most often. The top responses, in order, were **safe**, **walkable**, **diverse**, **affordable**, **vibrant**, and **green**.

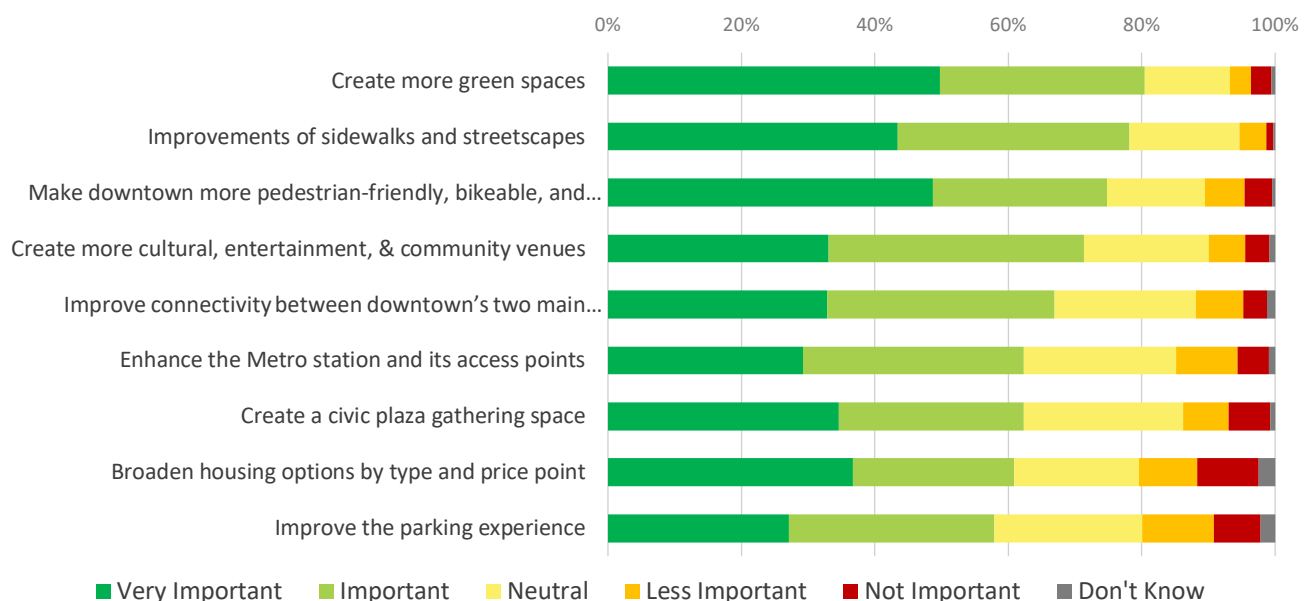


Q5: To achieve your vision for downtown, how important will implementing the following projects be over the next 5 to 10 years?

Respondents were asked to rate nine project areas by level of importance, again using a 1-to-5 scale with 5 being the highest (i.e., "Very Important"). The weighted average of each project is shown in the list below, while the chart illustrates the distribution of responses. As both illustrate, a majority of respondents view all of the potential projects as either "Very Important" or "Important" in the future.

Project	Weighted Average
Create more green spaces, such as pocket parks or a dog park	4.2
Improvements of sidewalks and streetscapes (more flowers, street trees, pedestrian lighting, sidewalk furniture, public art, etc.)	4.2
Make downtown more pedestrian-friendly, bikeable, and transit accessible	4.1
Create more cultural, entertainment, and community venues (theater, music hall, cultural center, etc.)	3.9
Improve the connectivity between downtown's two main activity districts (Woodmont Triangle and Bethesda Row)	3.9
Create a civic plaza that can serve as a centralized "town square" gathering space	3.8
Enhance and beautify the Metro station and its access points	3.7
Broaden housing options, with varied types and price points	3.7
Improve the parking experience (better signage, technology updates, coordinated management, etc.)	3.6

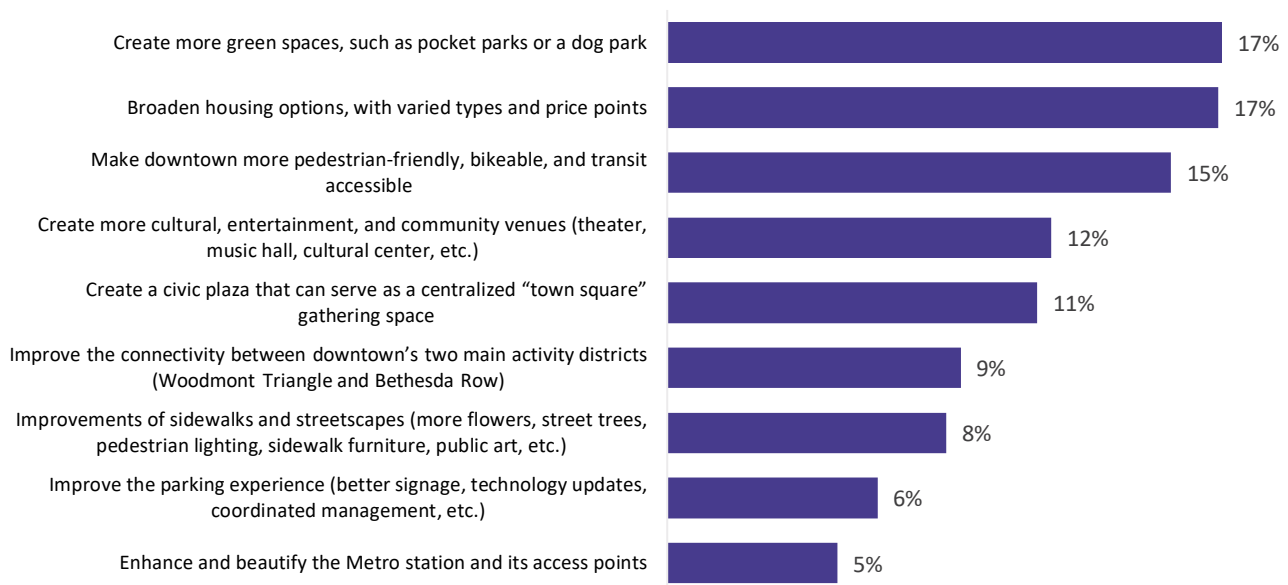
Projects receiving the highest ratings were **Create more green spaces**, **Improvements of sidewalks and streetscapes**, and **Make downtown more pedestrian-friendly, bikeable and transit accessible**. Ranked lowest (but still overall important) were **Metro station improvements**, **Broaden housing options**, and **Improve the parking experience**. Note on the chart below that, while housing options had a lower weighted average, it had the fourth greatest number of "Very Important" rankings.



Q6: From the same list as above, which one physical improvement do you consider to be MOST important for the future of downtown Bethesda?

To further assist in identifying priorities, respondents were asked to select one physical improvement from the project list above that is most important. Results are shown in the chart below.

The result show no outstanding emphasis on any one project. Two projects tied for greatest importance: **Create more green spaces** and **Broaden housing options**. Housing is notable for dramatically rising in importance compared to scores from the previous question. Close behind in third place is **Make downtown more pedestrian-friendly and bikeable**. **Enhance the Metro station** and **Improve the parking experience** were selected least often.

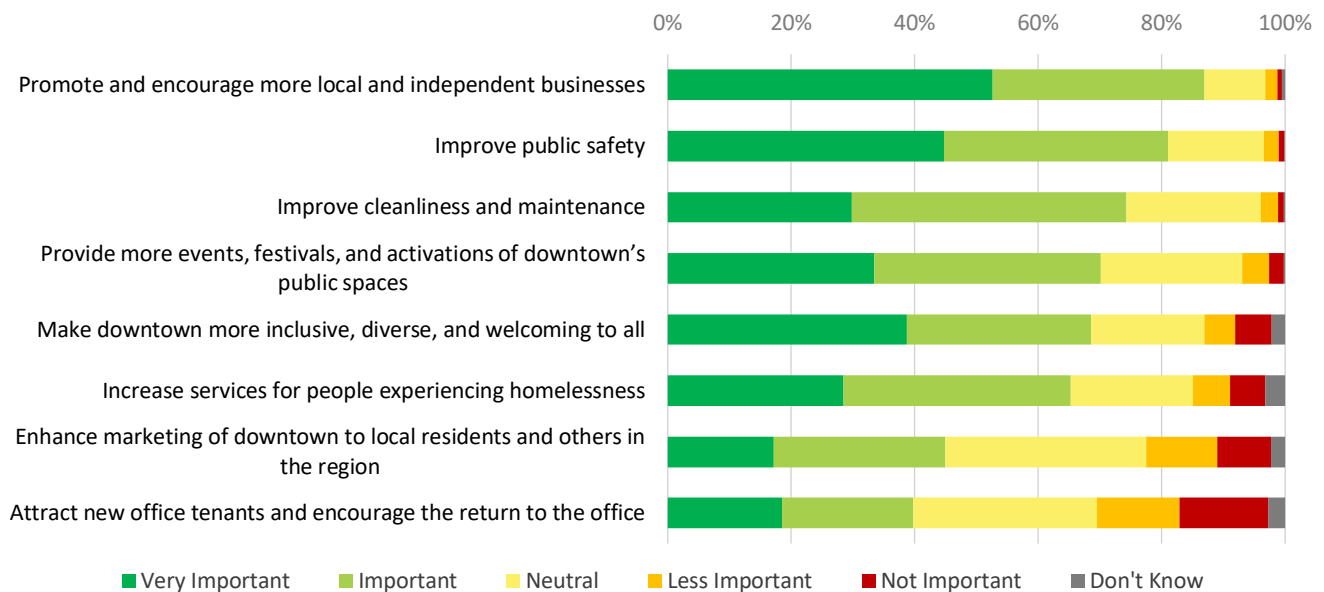


Q7: To achieve your vision for downtown Bethesda, how important will the following services and programs be over the next 5 to 10 years?

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of eight services or programs BUP could focus on in the future on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "Not Important" and 5 being "Very Important." All services or programs were viewed as important to some degree, indicated by a weighted average greater than 3 ("Neutral") as seen in the table below.

Service/Program	Weighted Average
Promote and encourage more local and independent businesses	4.4
Improve public safety	4.2
Improve cleanliness and maintenance	4.0
Provide more events, festivals, and activations of downtown's public spaces	4.0
Make downtown more inclusive, diverse, and welcoming to all	3.9
Increase services for people experiencing homelessness	3.8
Enhance marketing of downtown to local residents and others in the region	3.3
Attract new office tenants and encourage the return to the office	3.2

The following chart illustrates the distribution of responses for each service or program. **Promote and encourage more local businesses** emerged as the most highly valued service or program, with 53% rating it as “Very Important.” **Improve public safety**, **Improve cleanliness/maintenance**, and **Provide more events/activation downtown** all received majority “Very Important” or “Important” ratings, as did **Make downtown more inclusive** and **Increase services for people experiencing homelessness**. The majority of respondents rated **Enhance marketing activities** and **Attract new office tenants** as “Neutral.”



Q8: From the same list as above, which one service or program do you consider to be MOST important for the future of downtown Bethesda?

When asked to choose just one service or program as most important, nearly a third of respondents chose **Promote and encourage more local businesses**. This aligns with many open-ended comments from the following question (Q9) calling for non-chain retailers and restaurants at mixed price points. **Improving public safety** was the next most common response, selected by just under a quarter of respondents. (It should be noted that the current state of public safety was rated quite highly in Question 1. The results from this question can be interpreted as respondents desiring it to stay that way). **More events and activity downtown** and **Make downtown more inclusive** emerged as third and fourth most frequently chosen, respectively.



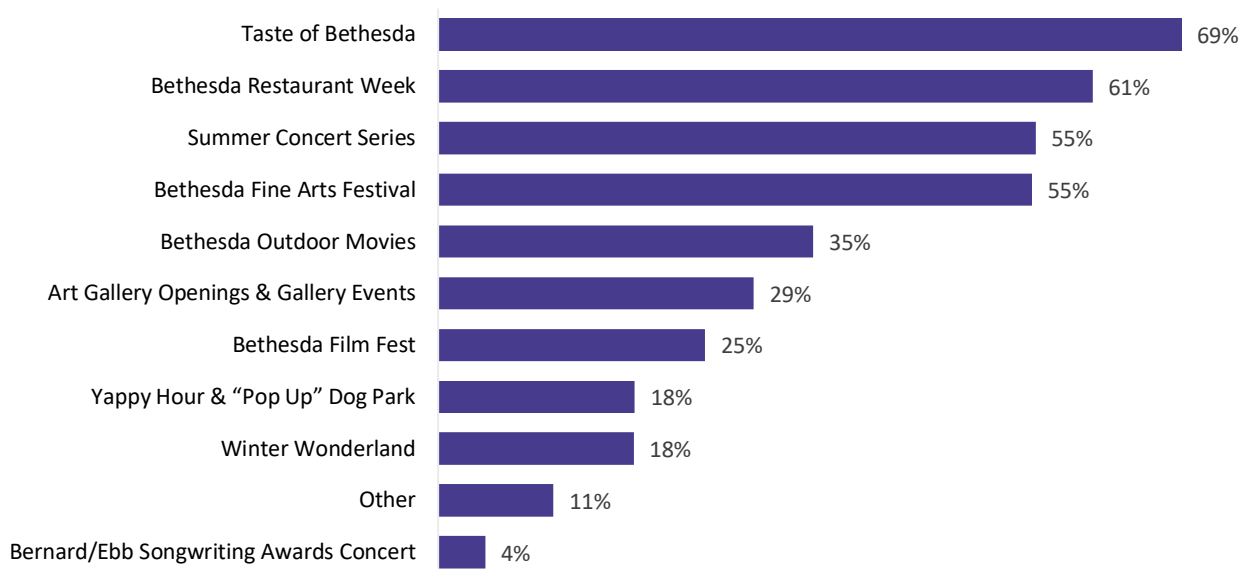
Q9: If you could suggest one additional and specific improvement to enhance downtown Bethesda, not listed above, what would it be?

Respondents were asked to provide ideas for additional improvements to downtown Bethesda in an open-ended format. About half of survey participants provided an answer, with many simply elaborating on and emphasizing answer choices that were provided above. Below are new ideas and common themes, including several quotes:

- Bookstore- *"Bring back Barnes and Noble or some other bookstore - this amenity is sorely lacking in downtown Bethesda"*
- Evening/late night activation – *"Bethesda is great Monday through Friday into 6. After lunch/happy hour Bethesda goes dead except for a few bars. There needs to be more options for after happy hour to keep younger people in the area"*
- Bring back the Woodmont Ave. Streetery – *"Re-open the Woodmont Streetery as it previously existed. This was a far better space than the Norfolk Streetery (particularly with the CCT trailhead proximity). It also did wonders to slow traffic that regularly speeds down Woodmont Ave."*
- Pedestrian safety improvements – *"Pedestrian and traffic safety cannot be stressed enough - the crossing at Woodmont and Bethesda Avenue is a serious safety issue for ALL."*
- Dog park
- Unique, non-chain businesses
- More affordable stores/restaurants – *"Creating more diversity in price for the shopping and food in downtown Bethesda; the reason we lack community diversity is because the price of our surrounding activities/shops/food are prohibitive for many to enjoy."*
- Prevent business displacement, help control commercial rents
- Widen sidewalks
- Destinations for teens – *"Shops for teens - let me take my kids to Bethesda for clothes and record stores"*
- Increased tree canopy
- Housing (especially workforce/affordable)
- Outdoor amphitheater
- Pedestrian-scale building design and preservation – *"Preserve the low-slung buildings that are left (particularly at the Rugby end of Norfolk). There's hardly anything of the historic Bethesda left!"*
- Improve Circulator app (bus timing is inaccurate) and increase frequency of service
- Public restrooms
- Regular weekend events (farmers market)
- Rentable community spaces

Q10: Which of the following events are most appealing to you and are you most likely to attend?

Respondents were asked to share their interest in attending several downtown events. **Taste of Bethesda** was selected most often, with over two thirds of respondents (69%) expressing interest in attending. Just under two thirds (61%) expressed interest in the **Bethesda Restaurant Week**, and roughly half of respondents were interested in both the **Summer Concert Series** and **Bethesda Fine Arts Festival**. Fewer but still meaningful numbers of respondents expressed interest in **Bethesda Outdoor Movies**, **Art/Gallery Events**, and the **Bethesda Film Fest**. The **Bernard/Ebb Songwriting Awards Concert** received the least amount of interest.

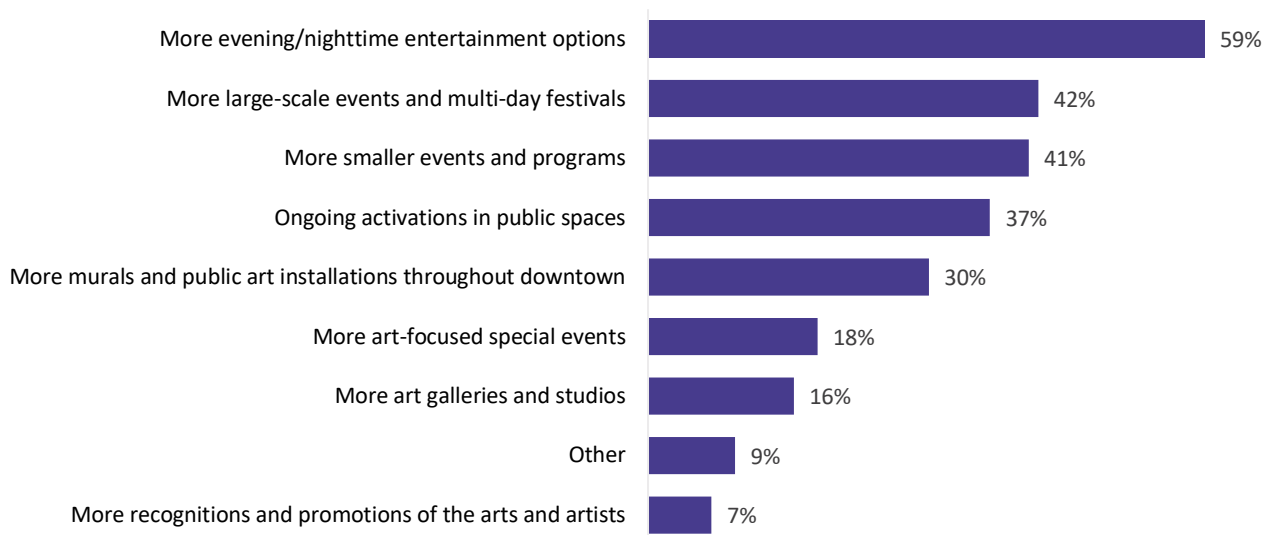


"Other" responses: 95 respondents provided alternative event ideas. Common themes included:

- Smaller, more frequent musical events and pop-ups
- Music festival
- Farmers market
- Arts and crafts vending that feel more inclusive and at more affordable prices
- Child and family-friendly events

Q11: To further grow Bethesda as an Arts & Entertainment District, which of the following efforts should be our top priorities? (Select up to three)

Respondents expressed a clear preference for **evening/nighttime entertainment options**. Also important were a mix of **larger, keystone events**, **smaller events**, and **ongoing activation in public spaces**. Respondents were least interested in arts-related programming.



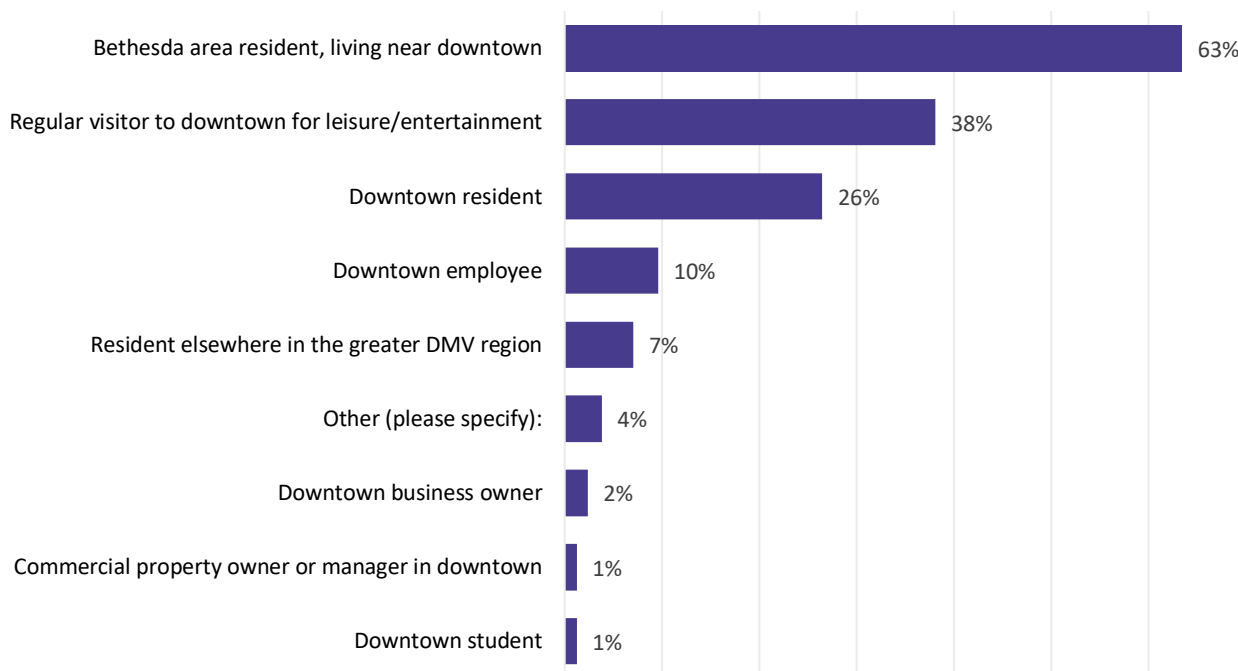
Q12: What event would you like to see that isn't currently held in downtown Bethesda?

Respondents were offered space to suggest ideas for events that currently aren't held downtown. 304 respondents answered with common themes listed below (in rough order of frequency). Many themes were repeated from previous open-ended "Other" comments.

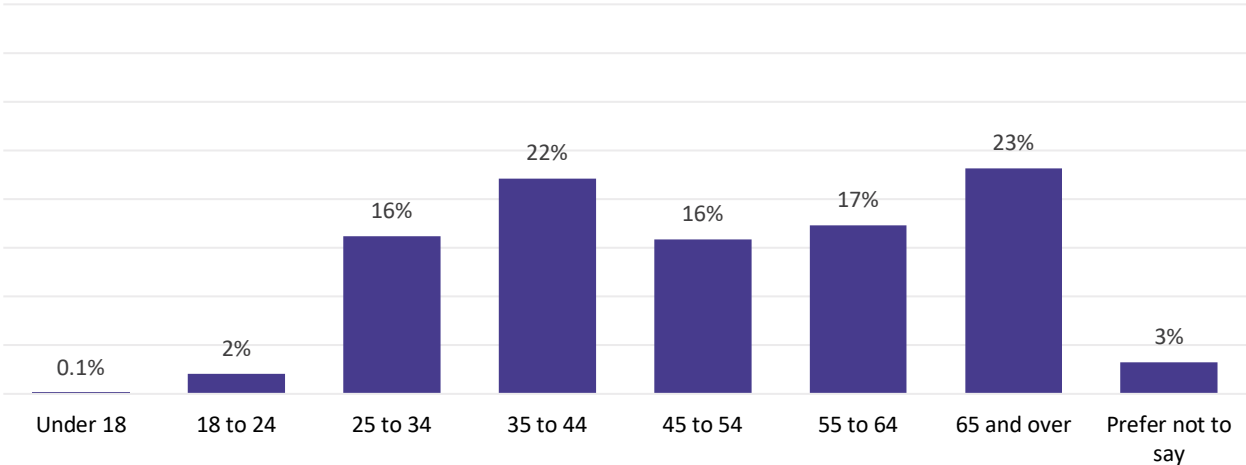
- Musical events (pop-ups, small concert series, festival; jazz/blues and folk are mentioned specifically)
- Beer/Wine festival
- Family-friendly events and activities
- Parade
- Farmers market
- Food events (pop-ups, festival)
- Dance gatherings (salsa, tango, contests)
- 10K/5K race
- Activities for seniors
- Health and fitness events (health fair, exercise groups)
- Diverse cultural/community events (Lunar New Year, LGBTQ)
- Town halls and civic engagement
- Holiday events (Halloween, Christmas)

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

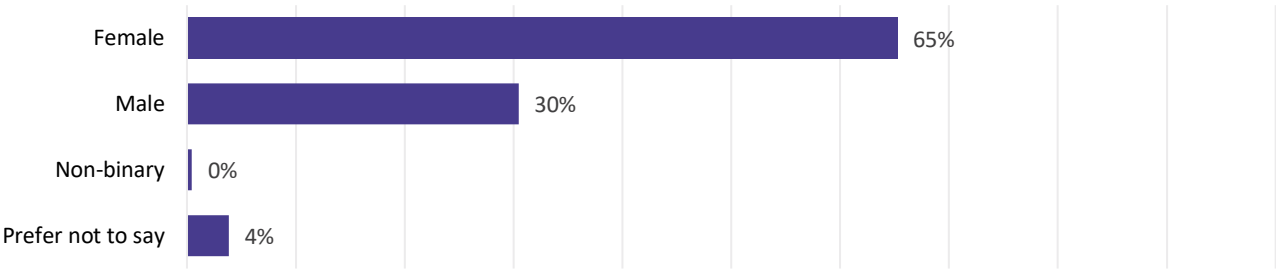
Which of the following best characterizes your primary interest(s) in downtown Bethesda? (Choose all that apply)



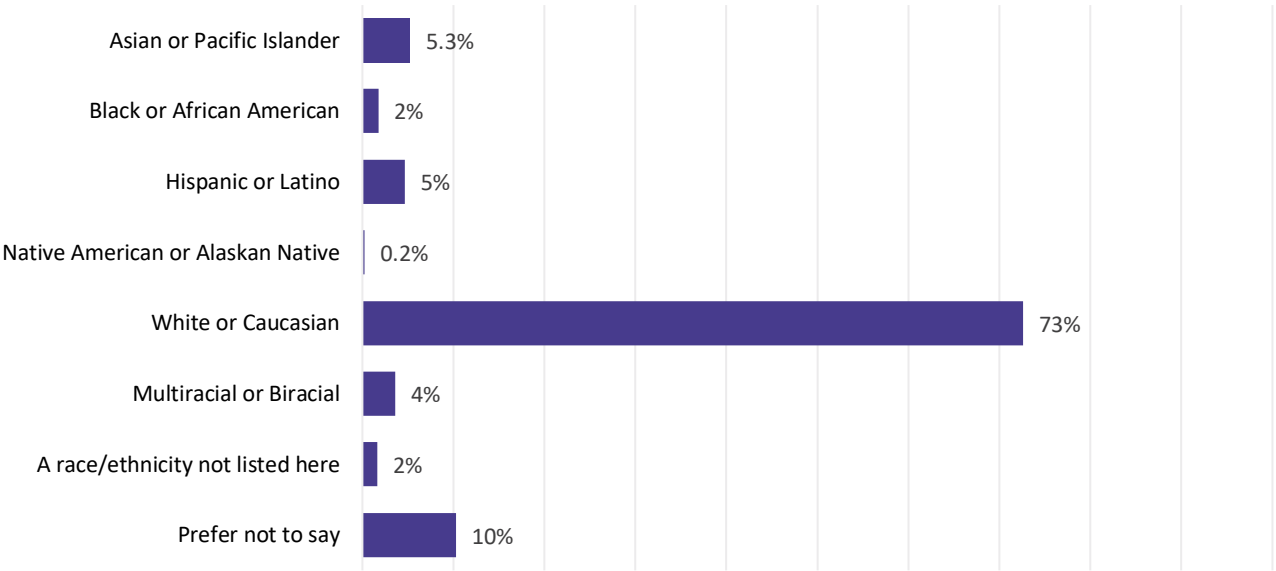
Age (optional)



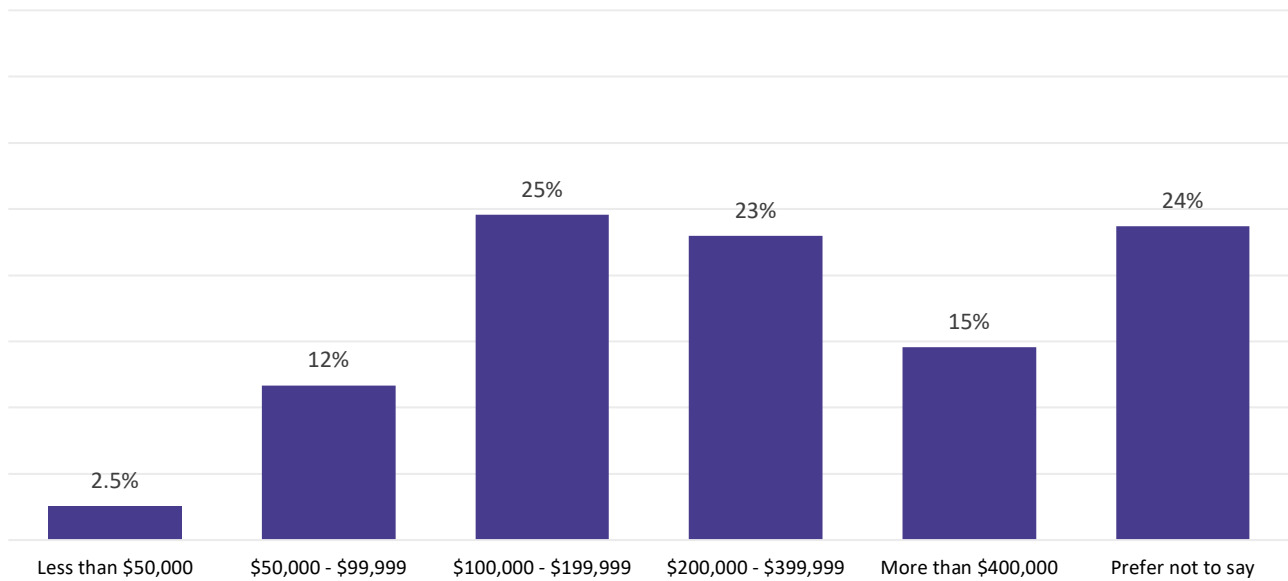
Gender (optional)



Which of the following best describes you? (optional)



Annual Household Income (optional)



Home Zip Code (optional)

Survey respondents provided 32 different home zip codes. The zip codes with the most representation in the survey data include (in order of frequency):

- 20814 (54%)
- 20815 (23%)
- 20817 (10%)
- 20816 (5%)
- 20852 (2%)

Together, these make up 93% of responses.

CROSS-TABULATIONS

The survey results were cross-tabulated by interest in downtown Bethesda, age, race/ethnicity, and income to see if responses differed based on respondent characteristics and demographics. Several categories in each demographic were omitted or consolidated:

- **Primary interest in downtown Bethesda:** “student,” “downtown property owner,” and “downtown manager or business owner” were eliminated due to low response rates.
- **Age:** Two age brackets under 25 were omitted due to low response rates.
- **Race/ethnicity:** Due to low response rates among non-White respondents, categories were consolidated into “White” and “Non-White.”
- **Income:** The “Less than \$50k” bracket was omitted due to low response rates.

Four questions were analyzed using cross-tabulation.

Q6: From the same list as above, which one physical improvement do you consider to be MOST important for the future of downtown Bethesda?

INTEREST IN DOWNTOWN

Downtown residents and Bethesda area residents are most interested in creating more **downtown green spaces and parks**. Those who work downtown or live in the greater DMV region are more likely to support **broader housing options**, possibly indicating interest in living in downtown Bethesda if the right priced and/or types of housing were available. Downtown employees are the only group to express value in **improving connectivity between Woodmont Triangle and Bethesda Row**. This group was less interested than other groups in measures to make downtown more **pedestrian, bike and transit friendly**.

Q6 cross-tabulated by interest in downtown	Bethesda area resident	Greater DMV area resident	Downtown resident	Downtown employee
<i>Number of responses</i>	563	63	237	86
Broaden housing options, with varied types and price points	15%	29%	16%	27%
Make downtown more pedestrian-friendly, bikeable, and transit accessible	15%	17%	16%	9%
Create more cultural, entertainment, and community venues	11%	17%	13%	16%
Create more green spaces, such as pocket parks or a dog park	17%	6%	20%	8%
Create a civic plaza that can serve as a centralized “town square” gathering space	13%	6%	10%	9%
Improve the connectivity between downtown’s two main activity districts (Woodmont Triangle and Bethesda Row)	9%	6%	8%	13%
Improvements of sidewalks and streetscapes	9%	5%	6%	7%
Enhance and beautify the Metro station and its access points	4%	5%	9%	7%
Improve the parking experience	7%	8%	3%	3%

AGE

The youngest respondents were the most supportive of **broadening housing options**, with the highest majority of any group (22%) selecting this as their top choice. 65+ respondents expressed an emphasis on the experience of getting around downtown: this group had higher support than some other groups for making downtown more **pedestrian, bike and transit-accessible**, **improving sidewalks and streetscapes**, and **improving the parking experience**. Respondents in the middle age ranges, between 35-64, were more interested in creating more **cultural, entertainment and community venues** than the youngest and oldest respondent groups.

Q6 cross-tabulated by age	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65+
<i>Number of responses</i>	141	192	138	150	200
Broaden housing options, with varied types and price points	22%	13%	17%	19%	15%
Create more green spaces, such as pocket parks or a dog park	18%	11%	20%	15%	17%
Make downtown more pedestrian-friendly, bikeable, and transit accessible	16%	17%	13%	13%	16%
Create a civic plaza that can serve as a centralized “town square” gathering space	11%	16%	12%	11%	8%
Create more cultural, entertainment, and community venues	11%	13%	14%	15%	7%
Improve the connectivity between downtown’s two main activity districts (Woodmont Triangle and Bethesda Row)	9%	13%	9%	9%	6%
Enhance and beautify the Metro station and its access points	6%	4%	5%	4%	7%
Improvements of sidewalks and streetscapes	4%	9%	5%	10%	13%
Improve the parking experience	4%	4%	5%	3%	13%

RACE/ETHNICITY

Non-White respondents were much more supportive of **broadening housing options** and creating more **cultural, entertainment and community venues**. In contrast, White respondents were more interested in **creating more green spaces** and making downtown more **pedestrian, bike and transit-accessible**.

Q6 cross-tabulated by race/ethnicity	White	Non-White
<i>Number of responses</i>	620	146
Broaden housing options, with varied types and price points	16%	23%
Create more green spaces, such as pocket parks or a dog park	17%	12%
Create more cultural, entertainment, and community venues	10%	17%
Make downtown more pedestrian-friendly, bikeable, and transit accessible	17%	8%
Create a civic plaza that can serve as a centralized “town square” gathering space	11%	12%
Improve the connectivity between downtown’s two main activity districts (Woodmont Triangle and Bethesda Row)	10%	10%
Improvements of sidewalks and streetscapes	8%	8%
Improve the parking experience	6%	6%
Enhance and beautify the Metro station and its access points	5%	5%

ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Those making under \$100K placed significant emphasis on one improvement: **broadening housing options**.

Nearly a third of respondents in this group chose this as their number one priority. In contrast, no other income bracket's top choice received more than 18% support. That said, even higher income brackets up to \$400,000 also had strong support for broadening housing options.

Those in higher income brackets were much more interested in **creating a civic plaza, improving connectivity between Woodmont Triangle and Bethesda Row**, and **improving sidewalk conditions**.

Q6 cross-tabulated by income	\$50K - \$99K	\$100K - \$199K	\$200K - \$399K	\$400K or more
<i>Number of responses</i>	96	202	191	122
Broaden housing options, with varied types and price points	32%	17%	16%	10%
Create more green spaces, such as pocket parks or a dog park	19%	13%	13%	17%
Make downtown more pedestrian-friendly, bikeable, and transit accessible	14%	18%	17%	12%
Create more cultural, entertainment, and community venues	11%	13%	9%	12%
Create a civic plaza that can serve as a centralized "town square" gathering space	6%	10%	13%	14%
Improve the connectivity between downtown's two main activity districts (Woodmont Triangle and Bethesda Row)	6%	8%	10%	13%
Improvements of sidewalks and streetscapes	5%	6%	8%	13%
Enhance and beautify the Metro station and its access points	5%	5%	6%	6%
Improve the parking experience	1%	8%	8%	2%

Q8: From the same list as above, which one service or program do you consider to be MOST important for the future of downtown Bethesda?

INTEREST IN DOWNTOWN

While all respondents tended to select similar services or programs as most important, cross-tabulation revealed some differences in emphasis. Bethesda area residents who live outside of downtown were most enthusiastic about **increasing local and independent businesses**—over a third (35%) selected this as most important, which is nearly 10 percentage points higher than any other group's top choice.

Greater DMV area residents were most concerned with **making downtown more inclusive and diverse** (22%), while downtown residents chose this option the least (9%). Downtown residents were more interested in **events and activating public spaces** than other groups and also placed slightly more emphasis on **increasing services for people experiencing homelessness downtown**. Downtown employees were the least interested in events, but the most interested in **attracting new office tenants and encouraging return to the office**.

Q8 cross-tabulated by interest in downtown	Bethesda area resident	Greater DMV area resident	Downtown resident	Downtown employee
<i>Number of responses</i>	550	63	236	85
Promote and encourage more local and independent businesses	35%	24%	24%	26%
Improve public safety	20%	21%	24%	24%
Provide more events, festivals, and activations of downtown's public spaces	16%	14%	21%	11%
Make downtown more inclusive, diverse, and welcoming to all	11%	22%	9%	14%
Improve cleanliness and maintenance	7%	5%	4%	6%
Attract new office tenants and encourage the return to the office	6%	10%	6%	14%
Increase services for people experiencing homelessness	4%	2%	10%	5%
Enhance marketing of downtown to local residents and others in the region	1%	3%	3%	1%

AGE

All respondents had the same top four choices, though with variations in order (aside from the top choice) and emphasis. Older respondents were much more likely to select **Improve public safety** as most important, with the 65+ bracket choosing this nearly twice as often as those 25 to 34. Younger respondents were more interested in **events and downtown activation**. The youngest age bracket, 25 to 34, was the only group to place moderate emphasis on **increasing services for people experiencing homelessness** (12%), with this service tying for fourth place along with **making downtown more inclusive**.

Q8 cross-tabulated by age	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65+
<i>Number of responses</i>	139	189	138	144	196
Promote and encourage more local and independent businesses	30%	30%	36%	37%	30%
Improve public safety	14%	19%	14%	22%	27%
Provide more events, festivals, and activations of downtown's public spaces	18%	23%	19%	14%	13%
Make downtown more inclusive, diverse, and welcoming to all	12%	14%	12%	10%	14%
Attract new office tenants and encourage the return to the office	6%	6%	7%	6%	6%
Improve cleanliness and maintenance	4%	4%	9%	8%	5%
Increase services for people experiencing homelessness	12%	3%	4%	1%	6%
Enhance marketing of downtown to local residents and others in the region	4%	1%	1%	2%	0%

RACE/ETHNICITY

Differences between White and Non-White respondents were subtle. Non-White respondents placed slightly more emphasis on **improving public safety** and **making downtown more inclusive**. White respondents were slightly more interested in **promoting local businesses** and **increasing events and activating downtown**.

Q8 cross-tabulated by race/ethnicity	White	Non-White
<i>Number of responses</i>	611	145
Promote and encourage more local and independent businesses	33%	28%
Improve public safety	19%	24%
Provide more events, festivals, and activations of downtown's public spaces	18%	14%
Make downtown more inclusive, diverse, and welcoming to all	12%	15%
Attract new office tenants and encourage the return to the office	7%	3%
Improve cleanliness and maintenance	5%	6%
Increase services for people experiencing homelessness	5%	7%
Enhance marketing of downtown to local residents and others in the region	1%	2%

ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Lower income respondents were much more supportive of **increasing events and activating downtown's public spaces**. They were the least interested in **promoting local businesses**. This may be explained by findings from analysis of open-ended comments which revealed recurring calls for more diverse businesses offering a greater range of prices downtown. Retail and dining options are currently viewed as too expensive and not relevant for many respondents' lifestyles/needs. Further emphasizing this theme, respondents in the lower two income brackets were the most likely to choose **Make downtown more inclusive** as their top value.

Q8 cross-tabulated by income	\$50K - \$99K	\$100K - \$199K	\$200K - \$399K	\$400K or more
<i>Number of responses</i>	94	203	187	119
Promote and encourage more local and independent businesses	17%	34%	31%	34%
Provide more events, festivals, and activations of downtown's public spaces	23%	17%	18%	18%
Improve public safety	19%	17%	15%	21%
Make downtown more inclusive, diverse, and welcoming to all	16%	19%	10%	11%
Attract new office tenants and encourage the return to the office	3%	4%	12%	10%
Improve cleanliness and maintenance	5%	2%	9%	6%
Increase services for people experiencing homelessness	14%	5%	3%	0%
Enhance marketing of downtown to local residents and others in the region	2%	2%	2%	0%

Q10: Which of the following events are most appealing to you and are you most likely to attend?

INTEREST IN DOWNTOWN

No significant differences.

AGE

Respondents in all age brackets generally expressed interest in the same top three events. However, younger respondents expressed more interest in attending events overall, particularly food and music events. Respondents 25 to 34 were most enthusiastic about **Taste of Bethesda**, with 81% expressing interest in attending the event. This is the highest level of interest in any event by any age group. Older respondents were more attracted to **art-related events**, especially the **Bethesda Fine Arts Festival**, which was selected most often by this age group (68%).

Q10 cross-tabulated by age	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65+
<i>Number of responses</i>	139	189	138	144	196
Taste of Bethesda	81%	71%	72%	67%	59%
Bethesda Restaurant Week	77%	60%	57%	56%	59%
Summer Concert Series	58%	57%	59%	59%	49%
Bethesda Fine Arts Festival	45%	42%	52%	66%	68%
Bethesda Outdoor Movies	47%	49%	36%	25%	17%
Art Gallery Openings & Gallery Events	27%	16%	24%	40%	37%
Bethesda Film Fest	25%	18%	21%	36%	25%
Yappy Hour & "Pop Up" Dog Park	33%	17%	20%	19%	9%
Winter Wonderland	22%	33%	17%	13%	6%
Other	4%	15%	7%	13%	11%
Bernard/Ebb Songwriting Awards Concert	5%	4%	4%	5%	5%

RACE/ETHNICITY

Similar to other cross-tabulation findings for this question, all categories of respondents exhibited preferences for the same four events. However, Non-White respondents expressed more enthusiasm for attending events overall. The exception where White respondents showed more interest in an event was the **Bethesda Fine Arts Festival**.

Q10 cross-tabulated by race/ethnicity	White	Non-White
<i>Number of responses</i>	615	143
Taste of Bethesda	69%	73%
Bethesda Restaurant Week	60%	72%
Summer Concert Series	54%	64%

Bethesda Fine Arts Festival	57%	49%
Bethesda Outdoor Movies	32%	47%
Art Gallery Openings & Gallery Events	27%	36%
Bethesda Film Fest	24%	31%
Winter Wonderland	15%	29%
Yappy Hour & "Pop Up" Dog Park	18%	24%
Other	10%	7%
Bernard/Ebb Songwriting Awards Concert	4%	6%

ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME

As with the other cross-tabulation findings for this question, all categories of respondents exhibited the most interest in the same four events. However, **Bethesda Restaurant Week** appeared to appeal more to lower income than to higher income respondents. In addition, lower income respondents expressed the most interest of any group in **Bethesda Outdoor Movies** and the **Yappy Hour and "Pop Up" Dog Park**. In contrast, **Winter Wonderland** appealed most to those in higher incomes.

Q10 cross-tabulated by income	\$50K - \$99K	\$100K - \$199K	\$200K - \$399K	\$400K or more
<i>Number of responses</i>	94	202	186	121
Taste of Bethesda	69%	73%	69%	71%
Bethesda Restaurant Week	69%	64%	61%	51%
Summer Concert Series	47%	61%	55%	61%
Bethesda Fine Arts Festival	45%	60%	46%	52%
Bethesda Outdoor Movies	43%	42%	33%	31%
Art Gallery Openings & Gallery Events	24%	30%	27%	27%
Bethesda Film Fest	23%	29%	20%	23%
Yappy Hour & "Pop Up" Dog Park	32%	17%	23%	18%
Winter Wonderland	14%	16%	19%	28%
Other	4%	9%	10%	10%
Bernard/Ebb Songwriting Awards Concert	1%	6%	6%	3%

Q11: To further grow Bethesda as an Arts & Entertainment District, which of the following efforts should be our top priorities? (Select up to three)

INTEREST IN DOWNTOWN

Differences in emphasis were found between those who live or work closest to downtown versus greater DMV area residents. Downtown employees, downtown residents, and to a slightly lesser degree, Bethesda area residents, expressed overwhelming prioritization of **More evening/nighttime entertainment options**. This option was chosen by 76% and 70% of employees and downtown residents, respectively. This emphasis is particularly stark for employees, whose next most common choice was selected only 45% of the time. Employees clearly would enjoy opportunities to stay in downtown after work. In contrast, greater DMV area residents exhibited a wider variety of priorities and interests, especially showing more interest in **arts-related activities** and the less interest in **evening/nighttime entertainment** than other groups.

Q11 cross-tabulated by interest in downtown	Bethesda area resident	Greater DMV area resident	Downtown resident	Downtown employee
<i>Number of responses</i>	546	63	232	82
More evening/nighttime entertainment options	58%	51%	70%	76%
More large-scale events and multi-day festivals	38%	41%	53%	41%
More smaller events and programs	42%	35%	44%	41%
Ongoing activations in public spaces	36%	35%	41%	45%
More murals and public art installations throughout downtown	31%	38%	28%	39%
More art-focused special events	18%	29%	14%	18%
More art galleries and studios	16%	24%	11%	10%
More recognitions and promotions of the arts and artists	5%	21%	8%	10%
Other	11%	3%	6%	7%

AGE

Unsurprisingly, those under 65 were most enthusiastic about **evening/nighttime entertainment options**, although, again, this priority was first among all groups. Interestingly, the 25-34 age bracket and 55-64 age bracket showed the strongest desire for nighttime entertainment. This is possibly explained by this demographic being more likely to not yet have children or to be “empty nesters” and therefore have fewer evening childcare commitments. The 25 to 34 bracket appeared most interested in **large-scale and multi-day events** and less interested in **smaller events**, whereas this was the reverse for the 35-44 age bracket. This again could be explained by child-rearing, where those 35-44 are more likely to have younger children and prefer low-time-commitment activities and/or see smaller events as more kid-friendly. Older respondents were again more supportive of **arts-related activities**.

Q11 cross-tabulated by age	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65+
<i>Number of responses</i>	137	191	135	148	187
More evening/nighttime entertainment options	71%	63%	61%	73%	43%
More large-scale events and multi-day festivals	55%	39%	43%	34%	41%
More smaller events and programs	39%	56%	42%	32%	30%
Ongoing activations in public spaces	49%	37%	39%	34%	26%
More murals and public art installations	34%	26%	23%	34%	33%
More art-focused special events	14%	14%	16%	20%	26%
More art galleries and studios	9%	11%	14%	20%	25%
Other	6%	9%	9%	11%	10%
More recognitions and promotions of the arts and artists	10%	4%	8%	6%	5%

RACE/ETHNICITY

No significant differences found.

ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME

All income brackets had the same top four priorities. However, lower income respondents showed the greatest preference for **ongoing activations in public space** as well as **murals, public art**, and **art-focused special events**. Adding nuance to this finding is analysis of open-ended comments throughout the survey which revealed common desire for events featuring more accessible and diverse art at lower price points.

Q11 cross-tabulated by income	\$50K - \$99K	\$100K - \$199K	\$200K - \$399K	\$400K or more
<i>Number of responses</i>	95	197	182	119
More evening/nighttime entertainment options	63%	56%	65%	71%
More large-scale events and multi-day festivals	42%	43%	42%	44%
More smaller events and programs	42%	38%	43%	36%
Ongoing activations in public spaces	48%	38%	34%	37%
More murals and public art installations	35%	31%	27%	26%
More art-focused special events	18%	22%	14%	8%
More art galleries and studios	11%	20%	12%	14%
Other	6%	9%	8%	11%
More recognitions and promotions of the arts and artists	7%	7%	7%	3%

<u>2019-2024 Strategic Plan</u>	<u>Accomplishments</u>
A. Core Area: The Bethesda Brand	
Strategic Goals	
1) A clearly defined Bethesda Brand communicated regionally and globally	Board and staff, with assistance and guidance from a local marketing firm, updated the BUP Brand and created a new BUP logo to be used on all uniforms, vehicles, BUP marketing materials, social media and more.
2) Enhanced communication by BUP with constituents and stakeholders	BUP created a monthly newsletter which highlights BUP's efforts and employees. A "Local Business Spotlight" was also started to highlight downtown Bethesda retailers and restaurants during COVID. BUP communicated COVID-related information and updates to all downtown Bethesda businesses and residents. And, special videos featuring all of downtown Bethesda's retailers and restaurants were created and shared on social media in 2023.
3) A shared sense of place	In partnership with MCDOT, Bethesda "Streeteries" (outdoor dining on Norfolk Ave. and Woodmont Ave.) were created to help businesses succeed during COVID. A consultant was hired to design a permanent Streeteries on the public activity corridor along Norfolk Avenue.
B. Core Area: Beautification	
Strategic Goals	
1) Beautification through art	BUP and the A&E District installed four public murals at the Bethesda Metro Station, Bethesdan Hotel, Garage 35 and Garage 11 through the efforts of the Arts & Entertainment District.
2) Enhanced branding and wayfinding	BUP's branding with new logos and artwork was updated. BUP's website was updated in 2019 (with another new update coming in 2024). We are working with a vendor to install outdoor touchscreen kiosks.
3) Activated and attractive urban places	See answer to A.3). BUP partnered with MNCPPC on the beautification of Cheltenham Park and Chase Avenue Park. We also partnered with MNCPPC on the creation of "Yappy Hour" pop-up dog park events in Elm St Park. The enhanced/expanded Summer Concert Series was moved to the Norfolk Avenue Streeteries in 2021.

4) Updated streetscape guidelines	BUP worked with MNCPPC during the Bethesda Downtown Master Plan Process to update and rewrite the Downtown Bethesda Streetscape Guidelines.
5) Focus on sidewalk and crosswalk enhancements	BUP annually provides DOT with inventory of crosswalks that need to be restriped or added.
6) Targeted fundraising efforts	BUP solicited and secured sponsorships from private entities to create new events, programs and initiatives or improve current programs.
C. <u>Core Area: Arts & Entertainment</u>	
Strategic Goals	
1) Beautification through art	See answer to B.1)
2) Economic development through art	Events such as the newly located Summer Concerts, now held at the Norfolk Avenue Streeter, bring people to Bethesda to enjoy an evening of live music who also purchase food and beverages from our local restaurants. Additional examples include the Bethesda Art Walk which attracts art lovers to our galleries, and the Bethesda Fine Arts Festival which brings 20,000 people to downtown Bethesda for the annual two-day event.
3) Incorporate art into the streetscape	See answer to B.1)
4) Increased fundraising	All A&E events, programs or initiatives are funded by private donations, sponsorships or other outside sources of revenue.
D. Core Area: Mobility	
Strategic Goals	
1) Enhanced mobility infrastructure	Separated bike lanes were installed on Woodmont Avenue, Bethesda Avenue and Willow Lane. Future bike lanes are planned for Montgomery Lane and Cheltenham Avenue. Pedestrian Safety improvements added by 2024 at 7 intersections: Woodmont and Bethesda Aves., Bethesda and Wisconsin Aves., Woodmont Ave. and Montgomery Ln., Woodmont Ave. and Hampden Ln., Woodmont Ave. and Elm St., Montgomery and East Lanes, and Montgomery Ln. and Wisconsin Ave. New construction projects have included wider sidewalks, more bicycle parking (bike racks) and more electric vehicle charging stations. EV charging stations have been

	installed in public garages. Additional car sharing vehicles have been added in Bethesda. The Circulator bus benches have been refinished. BUP is working with the Circulator contractor to have EV buses purchased.
2) New wayfinding masterplan	See answer to B.2)
3) Progress toward meeting the Downtown Bethesda Plan's Non-Auto Driver Mode Share	The 2019 combined Employee and Resident Commuter Survey showed the mode share at 50%, a large increase from what was shown in the previous 2017 Employee Survey at 37% and close to the current 55% goal. The 2022 Employer Commuter Survey data showed 52% and Residential Commuter Survey data showed 62%. MCDOT is still waiting for a final analysis on that survey to get the official combined or "blended" mode share for 2022, but based on the data, it looks like Bethesda reached the 55% goal, mainly with teleworking.
4) Activate Norfolk Ave as a main street	See answer to A.3)
5) Construction impact mitigation	BUP initiated a working group with DOT, DPS, SHA and RSC to review construction plans to mitigate impacts on traffic and pedestrians. Created a GIS map layer to identify lane and sidewalk closures and detours. BUP sends out community alerts when there are construction impacts.
6) Bethesda Circulator expansion	There is no need or desire for route expansion at this time. We are currently working with DOT to add electric vehicles to Circulator route replacing gas vehicles.

FY'24 BOARD OF DIRECTORS ROSTER

Executive Committee

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<p><u>Jeff Burton</u> Executive Director Bethesda Urban Partnership, Inc. 7700 Old Georgetown Road., Bethesda, MD 20814 (W) 301- 215-6660; (F) 301-215-6664 Email: jburton@bethesda.org.</p>	<p><u>Pete Fosselman</u> Non-Voting Member: County Executive Rep. Bethesda Chevy Chase Services Center 4805 Edgemoor Lane, Bethesda, MD 20814 (W) 240-777-8200; (F) 240-777-8211 Email: peter.fosselman@montgomerycountymd.gov</p>